

TRUST BETWEEN A CUSTOMER AND A SUPPLIER IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

– Environmental technology business

Tiivistelmä

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Työn nimi Trust between a customer and a supplier in business-to-business relationships – Environmental technology business		
Tutkinto Tradenomi (AMK)		
Tiivistelmä <p>Ympäristöteknologiatoimittajat edustavat yritysten välistä liiketoimintaa, joka kiinnostaa toimialana myös yleistä kuluttajakuntaa. Heidän asiakkaiden liiketoiminta eroaa toisistaan merkittävästikin, mihin toimittajan on pystyttävä sopeutumaan. On herännyt kysymys kuinka asiakkaan ja toimittajan välinen suhde syntyy ja kehittyy erityisesti luottamuksen näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Asiakkaan ja toimittajan välistä suhdetta on tutkittu laajasti myös luottamuksen kannalta. Tiedekirjallisuus nostaa esiin useita muuttujia joiden avulla voidaan asiakkaiden ja toimittajien välisiä odotuksia liiketoimintasuhteissa. Mutta kuinka ne muuttujat vaikuttavat luottamuksen muodostumiseen, kehittymiseen ja mahdolliseen menetykseen kun tavoitellaan lojaalia liiketoimintasuhdetta? On syntynyt tarve selvittää syvällisesti monitahoista argumenttia laadullisella tutkimuksella.</p> <p>Jotta pystyttäisiin vastaamaan tutkimuskysymykseen, ympäristöteknologiatuotteiden toimittajan ja heidän asiakkaiden näkemyksiä tiedusteltiin haastatteluilla ja nettikyselyllä. Lisäksi tutkija kävi syvällisesti läpi omia kokemuksia asiakastapauksien avulla ennen kuin hän alkoi selvittämään aiheen teoreettista taustaa.</p> <p>Löydösten mukaan asiakkaiden ja toimittajien odotukset heidän välisessä suhteessa odotetaan keskittyvän myynti-, toimitus- ja asiakaspalvelutoimintoihin luottamuksellisesti. Tällä tarkoitetaan sitä, että myynti- ja ostajayritysten avainhenkilöiden tulee tuntea asiansa ja tuotteensa hyvin sekä niihin liittyvä tieto pitää kommunikoida ammattimaisesti, avoimesti ja rehellisesti. Luottamus ja viime kädessä lojaalius voidaan saavuttaa vain tiiviin ja luotettavan sekä uskottavan yhteistyön avulla.</p> <p>Tulevaisuuden tutkimukseksi ehdotetaan samankaltaista tutkimusasetelmaa mutta kattavammalla aineistolla ja laajennettuna eri osapuolten välisiin verkostoihin.</p>		
Asiasanat business-to-business, relationships, trust, environmental technology, qualitative study		

Abstract

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Title of publication Trust between a customer and a supplier in business-to-business relationships – Environmental technology business		
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Abstract <p>Environmental technology suppliers represent business-to-business machinery industry which is gaining interest also in the public domain. Customers operate in variety business areas that suppliers need to adapt to. This raises the question of how customer-supplier relationships are developed and maintained especially from the perspective of trust.</p> <p>Relationship between customers and suppliers has been studied widely also from the perspective of trust. Literature suggests a number of characteristics and arguments which can be used to measure trust in business-to-business relationships. But how the characteristics influence trust development, maintenance and eventual disruption when targeting loyal relationship? The thesis presents a qualitative study to gain a thorough understanding of the topic.</p> <p>To answer the research question, an environmental technology supplier's sales personnel and customers were interviewed personally and via on-line questionnaire. In addition, before examining theoretical background, the author reflected on his own experience regarding customer-supplier relationships.</p> <p>The findings reveal that customers' and suppliers' expectations in business-to-business relationships are focused in sales, delivery, and after sales activities in a trustworthy way. This means that both customers' and suppliers' key personnel must know their own business and products well and the related information has to be communicated professionally, openly and honestly to satisfy both parties. Trust for loyal relationship can be achieved only through confidence in close cooperation.</p> <p>Similar study with wider and enhanced views to stakeholders in networks is suggested for deeper understanding of trust in business-to-business relationships.</p>		
Keywords business-to-business, relationships, trust, environmental technology, qualitative study		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Customer-supplier collaboration, especially in business-to-business relationships, is perhaps the most important aspect when thinking about any suppliers' sustainable business possibilities in the long run. These business-to-business relationships have attracted researchers, also from trust creation, maintenance and development perspectives. "Unfortunately, most of the research and too many of the marketing strategies treat customer-supplier exchanges as discrete events, not as ongoing relationships" (Dwyer et al. 1987, 11). Moreover, there are some characteristics in environmental technology related customer-supplier relationships which need to be studied.

Ford (1980, 350) indicates that an already established customer-supplier business relationship in an industrial market generates mutual importance to each and generates a significant entry barrier to other suppliers. According to Narver & Slater (1990) the purpose of customer value creation is to add value or reduce costs in a relationship. "A supplier creates value for a customer in two ways: by increasing benefits to the customer in relation to the customer's costs and by decreasing the customer's costs in relation to the customer's benefits" (Narver & Slater 1990, 21). The researchers suggest long-term focus and profit objective because "business having the highest degree of market orientation are associated with highest profitability" (32-33).

The meaning of trust is discussed by many writers. For instance, Rousseau (1998, 395) presents a definition of trust as follows:

Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another.

There are different conditions when trust arises. One is risk to a loss which is considered essential. "Risk creates an opportunity for trust, which leads to risk taking". Another condition to trust is interdependence between two parties which is closely linked to relationships. Therefore, trust is considered psychological and important to organizational life (Rousseau 1998, 395). In this study trust is considered as an objective to achieve but also an opportunity to develop something deeper to achieve in customer-supplier relationships.

1.1 Background, motivation, aim, and scope of the study

The interest to study customer-supplier relationships in business-to-business environment rose as a fundamental factor during the author's work training period at environmental technology business supplier. Diversified challenges in customer-supplier interaction guided the author to evaluate the meaning of trust in business-to-business relationships.

However, it was challenging without personal experience in industrial business to resolve customers' environmental technology related issues.

There were number of new challenges almost daily, which needed to be resolved in customer-supplier interaction. At the same time the challenges repeated one after another. In mind came the question what is the role of trust in business-to-business relationship. This appeared to be an interesting question which must be studied more in details.

The aim of this study is to understand the significance of trust in business-to-business customer-supplier relationships. The scope is to study the phenomenon from three points of view: 1) a supplier's sales managers' perspectives, 2) customers opinions, and 3) the author's own experiences. Thus, the following research question needs to be answered:

How expectation centric aspects and characteristics influence trust creation, development and eventual disruption in customer-supplier business to business relationships?

Environmental technology in this study is used to get hold of understanding of the meaning of trust in developing long lasting relationships between customers and suppliers in business to business contexts. To limit the study the following concepts and objects have been left out of scope, for example: marketing, business opportunity and risk management, cultures, project business, stakeholders, networks, business strategies, innovation, product development, business networks, international business, service business, and account management.

1.2 Structure of this study

To discover the most covering answer to the research question this study is structured as follows, see Table 1: After this Introduction chapter 1, the theory of the studied field is presented in chapter 2. Thereafter, in chapter 3, the research methodology is explained. The research results in a supplier's, customers and the author's perspectives are reported in chapter 4. The results in every studied perspective are analysed in chapter 5. And finally, in chapter 6, the research question is answered and the conclusions of this study presented.

Table 1 The study structure

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Theory in literature
Chapter 3	Research methodology
Chapter 4	Results
Chapter 5	Analysis of data
Chapter 6	Conclusions

2 THEORY IN LITERATURE

2.1 Relationships in business-to-business collaboration

According to Flint et al. (2011, 227) global competition is creating continuously difficulties for companies to maintain differential advantages towards competitors in nearly every industry and sector. Suppliers need to develop knowledge and learning processes of their market to sustain their competitive advantage. Particularly important is to discover customers' values and their satisfactions levels and, consequently, develop value creation activities for customers. This means expertise able to anticipate changes to develop unique advantages to the customers. This capability to change becomes a necessity in the markets where customers' value changes rapidly. Loyal and satisfied customers can be achieved working hard to connect small pieces of information for increased value. Needed information is suggested collect through 1) deep collaborative relationships with customers especially for lead generation and 2) focus on changes by customers over time (ibid.).

Customer satisfaction is linked to customer perceived value (Eggert & Ulaga 2002, 108). In fact "customer perceived value leads to satisfaction which, in turn, leads to positive behavioural intentions" (116). However, customer perceived value is a complement factor and not a substitute for customer satisfaction. Significant sources to generate customer value are supplier's salespersons (Jylhä 2018, 52). Their competence is critical when business-to-business relationship is created. Risk for customer perceived defection rises when positive impact on the perceived value is insufficient, not successfully communicated, nor properly practised.

Hald et al. (2008, 968) has developed a construct of "attraction" for customer-supplier relationship which is promoting voluntarism in purchasing and marketing activities in addition to attract a customer and supplier closer together in a mutual advantageous relationship. Central component in the construct is party's Perceived Expected Value associated with the other party. Second component is the attracted party's (presumably a customer) perceived trust in the other. And third component is the attracted party's perceived dependence on the other party, see Figure 1 (ibid.).

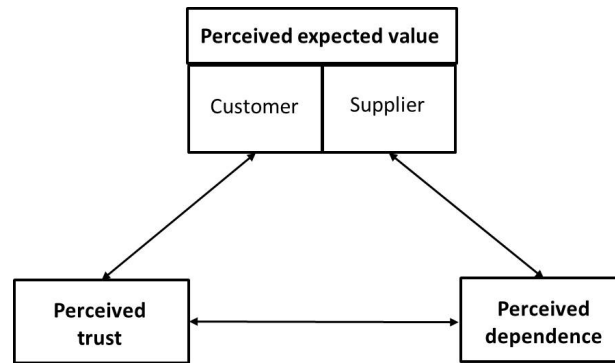


Figure 1 Simplified conceptual model of attraction in customer-supplier relationship (adopted from Hald et al. 2008)

To develop customer-supplier relationship managers are attracted to influence all three components separately (Hald et al. 2008, 968). Another way is to consider policies and activities that influence all three components together. In the dyadic customer-supplier relationship carefully applied investments, adaptations and communication will assist managers to succeed (ibid.).

Wilson and Jantrania (1994, 63) claim that some value is created in any relationship or strategic alliance. Major issue is how to share achieved value in relationship which becomes bigger issue the greater the value is created. Long term value is difficult because of dependence and opportunity costs. Additionally, customer or supplier may fail to use an opportunity because they are committed to a partner. Therefore, fear of missed opportunity raises uncertainty in relationship value. However, high value relationship would generate high business value. In sum, “value is a problematic concept which cannot be ignored.” As an example, delivery projects from a supplier to customers require very tight coordination of activities between the two companies. These activities increase the costs (Gadde & Snehota, 2000:315). However, relationship benefits to a supplier must exceed the costs to justify a partnership with a customer.

Both customers and suppliers can benefit in value creation but the relationship can also have value itself (Ritter & Gemünden 2003, 694). Value can be created in dyads (i.e. customer-supplier relationships), portfolio, business nets, networks, and on the human side. Total value of a supplier’s customer portfolio is not the sum of the relationships’ values but can be either more or less depending on the complementation or substitution between each other. Value creation in human level is valued in a single relationship. The relationships value in customer portfolio (i.e. key accounts) level is evaluated at the team level, while the firm value is judged according to the network’s performance (ibid.).

Geiger et al. (2011, 30) declare that “relationship offer direct profit impact and should hence be guarded and stabilized”. A supplier’s marketing- and sales managers are suggested deliver relationship value permanently by demonstrating activities for their customers, such as:

- “introducing value-adding services to complement functional base products,
- streamlining the supply process,
- devising measures to improve the customers’ operation processes,
- offering the supplier’s know-how and ability to shorten a customer’s time to market, and
- fostering personal interactions on the different levels of the buying/selling centres in order to make the value added visible”.

Marketing and sales responsible persons are urged to discover what constitutes relationship value for customers in their business with business partner companies, because value perceptions create foundation of long-lasting and successful customer-seller relationship (Geiger et al. 2011, 32). More precisely, to enable continuous relationship value delivery a value creation framework is suggested for new products and services or starting new businesses (Smith & Colgate 2007, 15). Value sources in the framework are:

- information,
- products,
- interactions with employees and systems,
- business environment from purchase and consumption perspectives, and
- ownership / possession transfer.

Smith & Colgate (2007, 15) intend that the suggested “framework serve to 1) describe a generic marketing strategy, 2) enhance product concept specifications, 3) identify value creation opportunities, and 4) develop measures of customer value”. This framework recommends enhancements to develop value proposals for existing products (17).

Customer value creation can be agreed upon as a continuous learning process when value delivery is based on a value delivery strategy which is enhanced according to value delivery performance (Woodruff 1997, 147). Learning process in activity levels for customer value is illustrated in Figure 2.

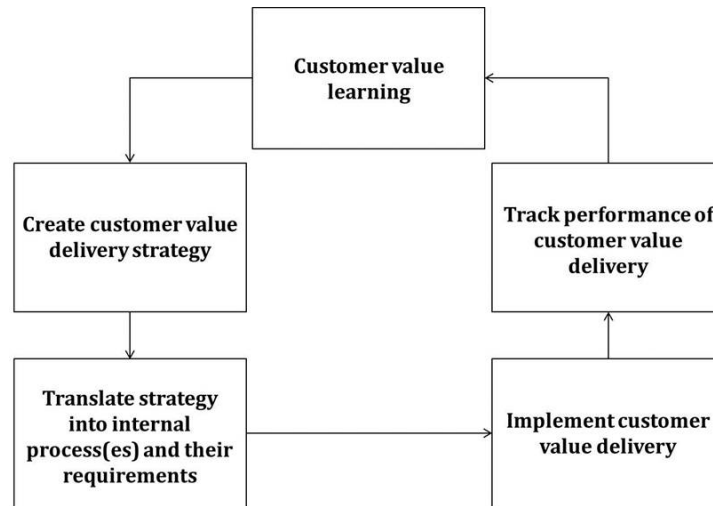


Figure 2 Value creation learning process (Woodruff, 1997:147)

Möller & Törrönen (2003, 116) have discovered that a project supplier's suitability to deliver a project depends on their capability to deliver value for a customer. Value in the customer-supplier relationship is measured in project cases with efficiency, effectiveness and network functions. Value creation process is subdivided to core value, added value, and future value. Customers are suggested create and use a supplier's capabilities to evaluate supplier's suitability for an intended value creation process. Therefore, organizations are suggested educate critical managerial skills to develop customer value-related capabilities (Woodruff 1997, 151). The reason is that earlier focus on (product) quality management in the 1980s and 1990s has changed to customer value-based competition. This change requires different managing customer value practises. "A customer value orientation will mean rethinking organizational culture, structure, and managerial capabilities" (151).

General market norms are influencing company which is operating in business relationships (Holmlund 2008, 46). Technical reliability as defect-free products and exterior features are significant in relationship quality evaluation (Holmlund 2008, 47), see Figure 3. When evaluating the relationship quality from social dimension perspective, personal level honesty, courtesy, trustworthy and positivity are considered necessary. Additionally, aspect of pleasure, like socialising, informality, having fun and being friends are valuable. If trust is achieved it's considered "a fundamental feature of a long-term relationship" (47).

Relationship quality contains also an economic dimension which relates to pricing, costs and productivity (Holmlund 2008, 48). Pricing depends on material costs and wages but price competitiveness is evaluated against domestic and foreign market situation. However, productivity improvement relates to production and inventory efficiency. Direct and

indirect relationship costs need also to be considered. Customer complaints and delayed receipt of payment because of complaints cause indirect relationship costs. Consequently, business-to-business perceived relationship quality model (PRQ) incorporates social interactions, sales activities and communication between a supplier and a customer (Holmlund 2008, 56).

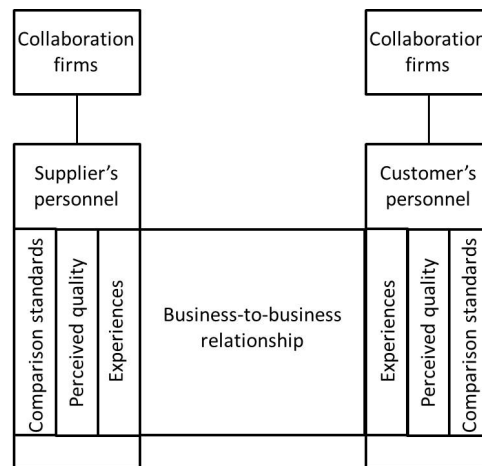


Figure 3 Perceived relationship quality (PRQ) model (adopted from Holmlund 2008)

Customer-supplier relationship quality in business-to-business interaction can be characterized with three components: 1) commitment, 2) trust, and 3) satisfaction (Walter et al. 2003, 160). Individual preferences of a supplier's customers should be discovered to fulfil them individually (Walter et al. 2003, 167). When relationship functions and expectations are fulfilled, strong bonds are created and competitive advantage gained. However, a supplier becomes replaceable in the eyes of a customer if they fail to fulfil expectations. Therefore, a supplier is beneficial to spend resources adequately with customers to fulfil their expectations. Continuous actions of distributive and procedural fairness are needed to create and maintain long-term relationship. Competitors are suggested look closely for their strategic behaviour and performance base to understand in which direction they are moving. Additionally, decision-makers in customers' organization must perceive a supplier's activities relevant.

Relationship quality in the business-to-business context is composed of four dimensions: 1) trust, 2) commitment, 3) satisfaction, and 4) service quality (Rauyruen & Miller (2007, 1). Every four dimensions influence attitudinal loyalty but only 3) and 4) affect behavioural loyalty (purchase intentions) when observing customer perspective towards suppliers. Customer loyalty is influenced only by organizational level relationship quality. Important is to notice that employee level relationship quality is not significant in loyalty to business-to-business customers.

According to Sheth et al. (2000, 65) “companies that thrive in the future will have an intimate understanding of their customers”. In consequence, customer-centric organizations are suggested perform customer value-adding activities and interactions. Financially, market orientation has had a positive effect on profitability. In customer-centric marketing, suppliers are expected to improve marketing productivity, increase market diversity and technology applicability (ibid.).

2.2 Trust in business-to-business relationships

Trust is considered as a psychological state and not behaviour, and it is not the same as cooperation because cooperation does not require trust necessarily (Kadefors 2004, 176). Persons can spontaneously enter into constructive interaction without risks to give out information when trust is present.

There are different views and levels of trust. Rousseau et al. (1998, 393) presents the features of trust as follows:

- multilevel trust (individual, group, firm, and institutional),
- trust within and between organizations,
- multidisciplinary trust,
- the multiple causal roles of trust (rust as a cause, outcome, and moderator),
- trust as impacted by organizational change, and
- new, emerging forms of trust.

Trust is closely related to relationships. Relationship commitment and trust has become key variables in successful relationship-based marketing (Morgan & Hunt 1994, 20). They developed a model to describe variables in relationships marketing named the key mediating variable (KMV) model, see Figure 4. The core elements are “Relationship commitment” and “Trust” which are positioned in the middle of five antecedent variables (Relationship termination costs, Relationship benefits, Shared values, Communication and Opportunistic behaviour) and five outcomes of Acquiescence (which means similar to acceptance), Propensity to leave, Cooperation, Functional conflict and Uncertainty) (23).

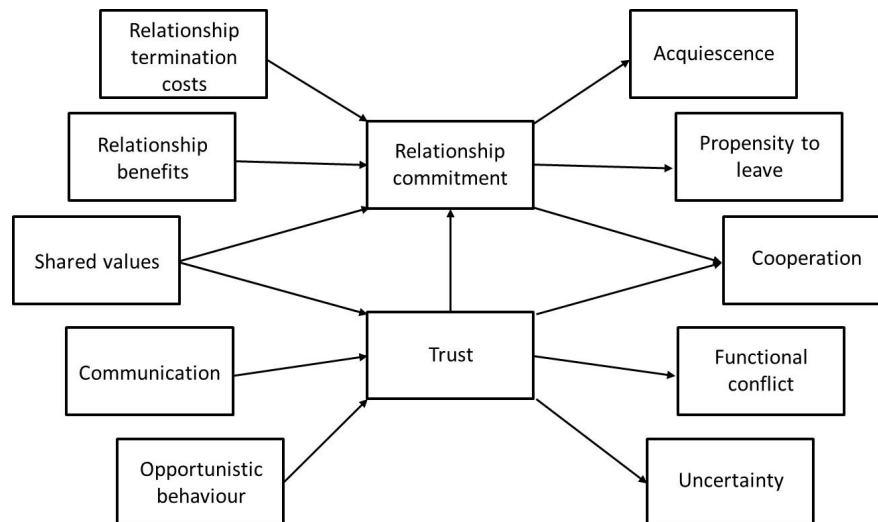


Figure 4 Model of relationship marketing (adopted from Morgan & Hunt 1994)

Morgan & Hunt (1994, 23) considers trust existing when “one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity”. However, “willingness” is not included in the model because it is part of human “behavioural intention”. They connect willingness to confidence: “If one is confident, then one would be willing; if one is not willing, then one is not genuinely confident” (23-24). However, trust is considered so important in relationship that it is considered “the cornerstone of the strategic partnership” (24). A supplier needs to develop their relationship commitment and trust to become a successful competitor by

- 1) providing superior resources, opportunities and benefits than competitors,
- 2) maintaining high standards of corporate values and partnering the ones with similar values,
- 3) communicating their expectations, market data and evaluations of the partners performance, and
- 4) avoiding maliciously taking advantage of their partners (34).

Relationship value must transform to relationship quality to maintain customer-supplier relationship (Ulaga 2006, 322). To stabilise customers purchasing relationship it’s necessary to offer superior value to the customer. This is sufficient to expand business although relationship value does not necessary transform to relationship quality. Trust is necessary in relationship to translate satisfaction into commitment (ibid.).

Gil-Saura et al. (2009, 593) has discovered that relationship value in business-to-business influences positively on trust, commitment and satisfaction towards supplier. In addition,

trust increases commitment between customer and supplier. Thereafter, improved commitment increases loyalty, but trust does not affect loyalty directly, but indirectly (through commitment), see Figure 5.

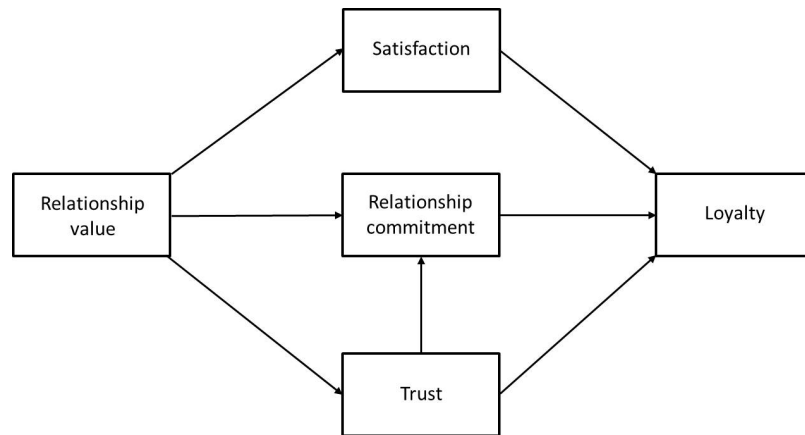


Figure 5 How loyalty can be achieved in customer-supplier relationship (adopted from Gil-Saura et al., 2009)

Trust can also be considered from other perspectives such as “mistrust” and in relation to “costly sanctions” and “detailed contracts” (Rousseau 1998, 398). However, positive intentions and beliefs with mutual loyalty and broad support become beneficial in relationship for example economically and increase of shared information. Relational trust is considered more resistant than calculative (exchanges based) trust and identity-based trust is the widest mode of relational trust. In addition, institution-based trust can contain both calculative and relational trust (400). Relational trust continuously increases and calculative trust decreases while institutional trust remains in the same level when the relationship develops over time (401).

There are potential trust related risks in personal level customer-supplier relationships. When a person is not trusted there can be expected opportunistic behaviour (Kadefors 2004, 177). A supplier lost their trust to a customer because they were not able to resolve customer’s problems (Haimala et al. 2011, 8). Second failed supplier missed customer’s trust when supplier perceived customer as highly opportunistic. Finally, successful third supplier succeeded when customer was open about difficulties with previous two suppliers. However, initial trust was missing due to two failed suppliers and customer demanded strict schedule terms and high penalty fees. “Trust was developed when third supplier was capable to resolve customer’s problems” (9).

3 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to understand the significance of trust in business-to business relationships and answer the research question presented in the Introduction chapter. This qualitative study is made in three parts: First, the supplier's sales personnel as informants are interviewed by the author to discover their views and opinions about business-to-business customer-supplier relationships. Second, a questionnaire was sent to the customers to evaluate their opinion about the researched topic. Third, evaluation of the authors own in-sights are presented of customer-supplier relationships when he was working in the sales department of the studied supplier.

3.1 Research approach

The objective for this qualitative study is to find answer to the research question. Data collection is focused on business related information obtained primarily from a supplier's sales personnel and customers informants. Therefore, author has to pay careful attention to informants as key persons of their business and to the content in data collection focusing to the studied scope precisely.

When the target groups of this study are selected, the intention is to link the information collected from them to the research question as close as possible (Rowley 2002, 18). The scope is to collect wide understanding of the studied question especially from the informants' expectations point of view. To be precise, customers and a supplier's informants' generic expectations are in focus and not the informants' evaluation of their counterpart success or quality how the counterpart succeeded to fulfil other's expectations. Therefore, the study is performed in three parts. During the first part sales personnel of the supplier is interviewed as informants. The questionnaire is composed of structured questions where informant must select between least and the most important view with scale 1-5 to the question. Additionally, open unstructured questions need to be answered in writing the informant's own opinion to the question. See questionnaires in appendixes.

In the second part customers are sent an on-line questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enrich data to answer the research question thoroughly. The questions are the same or similar than the ones asked from the supplier's informants. The source information for the supplier's interviews and for customers' on-line questionnaire is retrieved from the literature. The quantity of the questions was limited only to the essential arguments not to extend the questionnaire unnecessarily.

The final and third part is the description of the author's customer contacts personally in real life situation. The contact data was picked up from the supplier's customer database. Although author was working as a trainee-employee for the supplier he tried to be as neutral, objective and critical in every situation as possible. This was important to avoid influence of pre-understanding to for the second and third part of this study. When a customer contact leads to the situation when physical contact became possible, the author suggested visit customer premises for evaluation purposes. It seems that the relationship became cooperation when customer discovered eventual benefit opportunities for them. Every customer relationship which ended up to customer visit is considered a case in this study.

3.2 Reality methodology in this environmental technology case study

This study can be considered reality case study when every customer-supplier relationship is treated as a sales case. Realism research is considered suitable to study external reality of the marketplace (Sobh and Perry 2005, 1206). The studied cases deliver impression how customer-supplier relationship occurred in reality. In three parts of this study, relationship and trust is questioned from the supplier's and customers' concurrent situation and how the situation can be anticipated to develop in the future.

The empirical scope of this study is environmental technology business. The supplier is operating in Finland and their customer base is in Finland. The scope of this study was to understand the meaning of trust in business-to-business relationships and, eventually, to discover new views how to maintain business relationships.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Sobh and Perry (2005, 1206) suggest that "realism data analysis should concentrate on interpretations of the data to focus on underlying structures and mechanisms". In part one the supplier's sales persons are interviewed to discover their views to the studied phenomena. In part two a customer questionnaire is made on-line to receive more information and find answers to the research question. In the third part the author's own experiences are presented concerning the studied topic.

In part one, the supplier's sales persons were interviewed to discover their opinions and views to the studied topic, see Table 2. Interview questionnaire is based on theoretical literature, which is presented in chapter 2.

Table 2 Part one: Supplier's sales personnel interviews

Date	Position of interviewee	Interview duration
07.02.2020	Project manager	20min
07.02.2020	Project manager	30min
07.02.2020	Entrepreneur	1h30min
07.02.2020	Managing director	30min
07.02.2020	Project manager	20min

The interviews were registered. However, interviews were not littered because this study concentrates in the business-related content and not, for example, what a person is saying exactly or how he/she is behaving during an interview. Therefore, interview littering is not considered necessary.

The parts one and two study material, as questions, is literature based and the customer questionnaire was inserted to Google Forms- tool. The questionnaires are in the Appendixes of this thesis. Every customer was sent an email with the link to the questionnaire, see Table 3. The results of three empirical parts are presented in the Results chapter. The analysis of the results is presented later in its own chapter. Outcome of the supplier's sales personnel interviews and on-line customer questionnaire is an interpretation of the author.

Table 3 On-line questionnaire to customers

Date	Questionnaires sent (number)	Answers received	Response percentage
February 28 th . 2020	7	4	57,1

Questionnaire answers were gathered in two tables, one for supplier- and one for customer- data. Structured questions were answered in scale 1-5 and their average values were calculated for each characteristic in the column. Unstructured open questions were evaluated according to their importance order. Meaning that more same or similar answers received question was given highest importance and priority in analysis. And, consequently, less mentioned arguments received lower importance in the analysis chapter. However, every significant answer was reported in the analysis which contained importance to understand the research question.

The third empirical part of this study, meaning the author's own experience, was analysed according to the customer cases presented in the Results- chapter.

Empirical data was collected inductively from several different sources, for instance from literature, supplier's key personnel, customers, different sources in the Internet, and the author's own experiences. Therefore, study results can be considered reliable. The results of the empirical data were presented in the following chapter 4. Thereafter, empirical data was deductively analysed in chapters 5.

The meaning of every empirical part findings was gathered together in the Conclusions- chapter 6. The entire collection of the findings was necessary to answer the research question, presented in the Introduction of this study. In the end of the final Conclusions- chapter also proposals for future research were presented. It is important to notice that this study can be repeated any time and the results can be estimated similar or equivalent because of transparent comprehensive collection and analysis of data.

This study is realized as follows. The first and second part of this study is performed during the first quarter of 2020 and the third part data was collected during 2019, see Table 4.

Table 4 Study schedule.

Period/date	Assignments
2019	Initial research planning Studies performed which support this study Personal empirical part: Collaboration with business-to-business customers in the supplier's sales department (third part in this study)
February 2020	Data collection part one and two: the supplier's sales personnel interviews and on-line questionnaire to their business-to-business customers
February-March 2020	Writing the thesis
April 2020	Study ready for inspection
April 2010	Study delivery, final version

4 RESULTS: ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY MACHINERY RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of trust in business-to-business relationships between a supplier and customers. Attention is focused in expectations towards literature-based characteristics which are influencing relationship value, quality, and especially trust. Primary research data is collected from environmental technology supplier's sales personnel with personal interviews, see first sub-chapter, and from the same supplier's customers with on-line questionnaire, see second sub-chapter. In addition, the third sub-chapter contains author's own experiences of the studied topic.

Before entering to informant specific arguments in the sub-chapters some key elements related to environmental technology business and business-to-business characteristics were measured. The importance of environmental technology to customers was questioned from the supplier's and customers' informants, see Figure 6. According to customers' and the supplier's informants, the most significant argument appeared to keep the waste area hygienic. Second important argument is the economic one. The least important argument was considered image improvement potential of the questioned three arguments. However, relatively high score points can be interpreted that all three arguments are important, especially from customers' perspective.

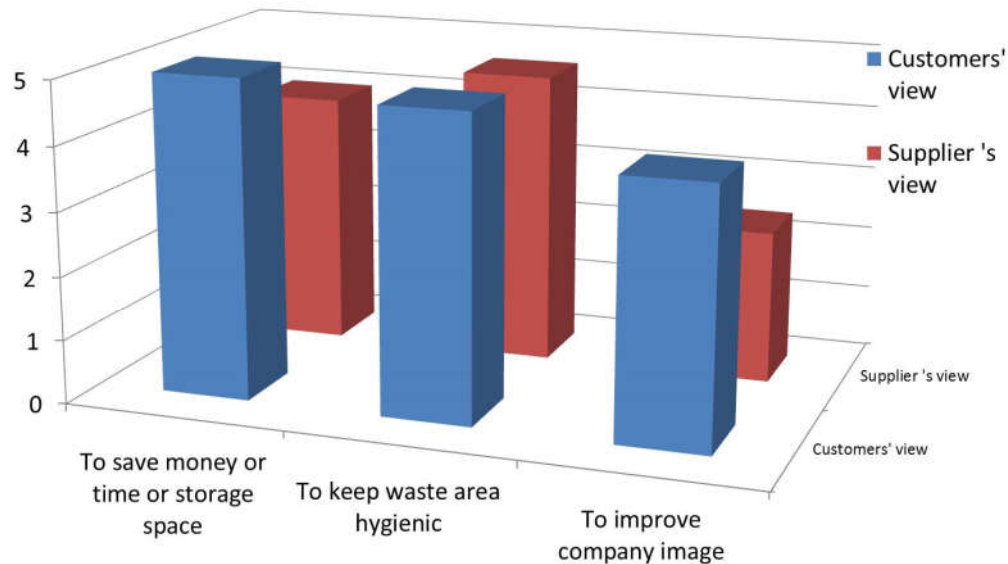


Figure 6 How important/valuable is environmental technology equipment for customers?

Comparing the supplier's and customers' informants' opinions it can be seen that customers evaluated economic benefits as highly important factor as the hygienic argument. This can mean that the evaluated environmental technology products can save costs from customer/user perspectives. Moreover, company image seems biggest potential for improvement in importance compared to the other two arguments.

Thereafter, the supplier's and customers' informants were asked their expectations towards importance of literature based 19 characteristics which influence their business relationships, see Figure 7. There appear several differences comparing customers and supplier's informants' expectations. However, they seem to follow similar profile. Characteristics can be sub-divided into three groups according to their importance: 1) similarly very important (both scores 4.0 points or more) characteristics, 2) similarly least important (both scores under 3,0 points or less) ones, and 3) dissimilarly very important (either 4,0 points or more) ones.

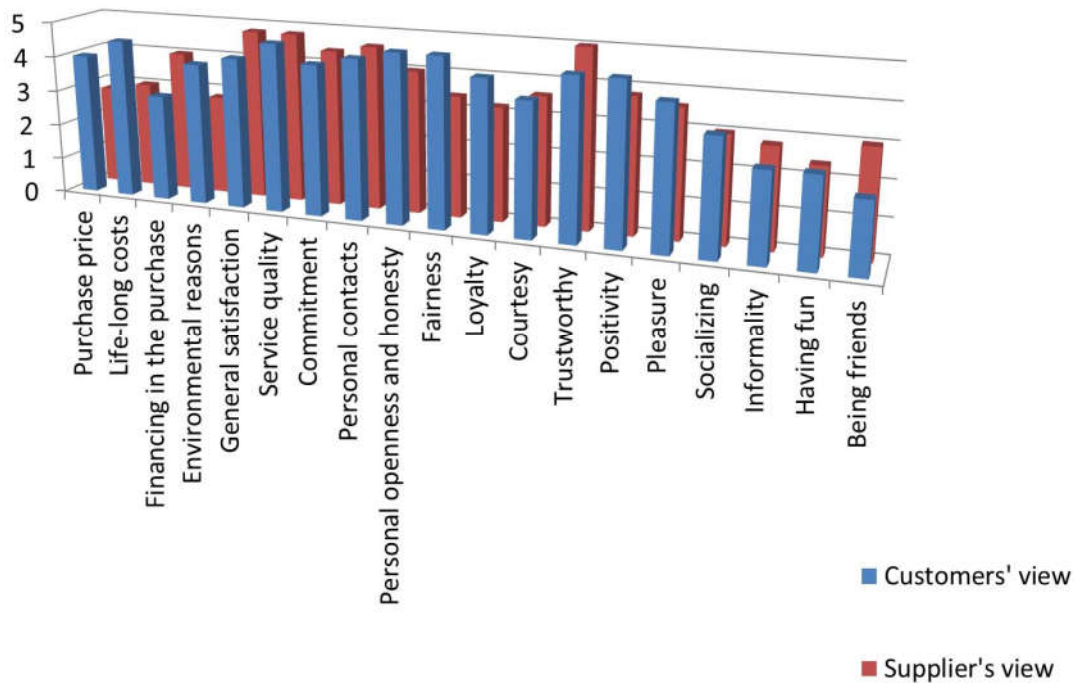


Figure 7 How important are the following characteristics for customer-supplier relationship (quality) in expectations?

Generally, it can be noticed that customers' informants have valued more characteristics higher than the supplier's informants. However, this does not necessary mean that the customers' informants' expectations are in higher level. It can be personal way to answer to any questionnaire by giving higher score points than others for example because of

representing different industry. The supplier is in technology machinery industry and customers for instance supermarket business. In fact, all customers' informants average score of all characteristics together is 3,89 points (in 1-5 scale) whereas supplier's corresponding value is 3,63 points.

Anyhow, group 1 (similarly very important between expectations of the supplier's and customers' informants, both scores are 4.0 points or more) characteristics are in importance order as follows:

- Service quality
- Trustworthy
- Personal contacts
- General satisfaction
- Personal openness and honesty
- Commitment
- (Courtesy, similar but both scores slightly under 4,0 points)

Group 2 (similarly least important, both scores 3,0 points or less) ones when the least important is presented first:

- Having fun
- Being friends
- Informality
- (Socializing, similar but both scores 3,0 points or just over)

Group 3 (dissimilarly very important, either 4,0 score points or more) ones when the highest difference in characteristic score points between supplier's and customers' informants given average points are presented first (the difference and code of Customer or Supplier, in brackets):

- Life-long costs (1,50, C)
- Fairness (1,35, C)
- Purchase price (1,20, C)
- Environmental reasons (1,20, C)

- Loyalty (1,05, C)
- Financing of the purchase (1,00, S)
- Positivity (0,70, C)
- Pleasure (0,40, C)

The importance of trust was questioned with score point numbers and open questions. Open answers are reported in the dedicated sub-chapters 4.1. and 4.2. separately for the supplier and customers. However, the importance of trust is valued (in scale 1-5) by customers' and the supplier's informants, see Table 5.

Table 5 How important or valuable do you consider trust in customer-supplier relationship?

Supplier's view	Customers' view
4,80	4,75

This means that trust, as a principal characteristic, is valued similarly very high by customers' and the supplier's informants. This is not a surprising result because Trustworthy-characteristic received highest summed points also in the previous 19 characteristic question set. Additionally, informants were questioned more details about trust creation and development. They were asked the importance of literature based nine characteristics which influence trust creation and development, see Figure 8.

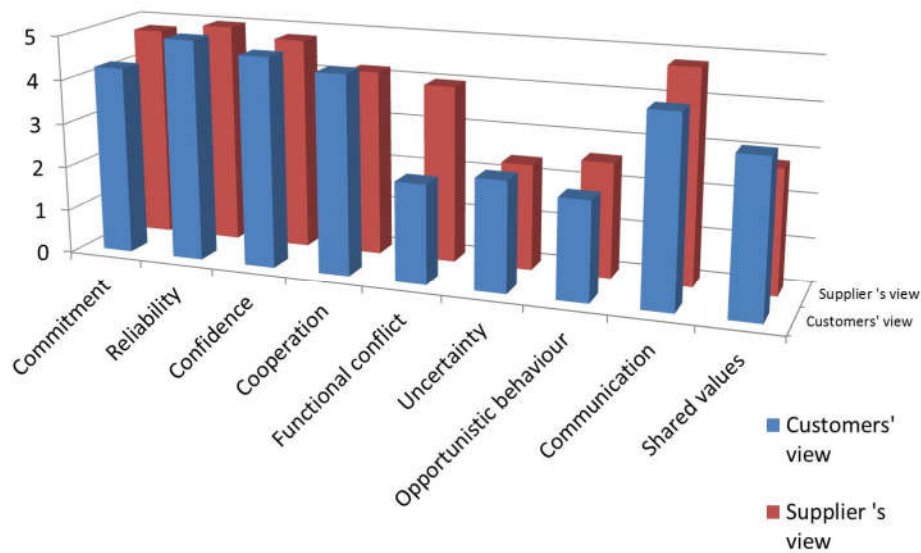


Figure 8 How important are the following characteristics to create and maintain trust?

The result shows that trust between a supplier and customer is composed of five most important characteristics, listed in importance order, according to the questionnaire responses:

- Reliability,
- Confidence,
- Communication,
- Commitment, and
- Cooperation.

However, Uncertainty- and Opportunistic behaviour- characteristics received relatively low points. This can mean that in business-to-business relationship there is little space for opportunistic behaviour and uncertainty.

The remaining two characteristics, Functional conflict and Shared values, divided the supplier's and customers' informants' opinions. Functional conflict- characteristic was valued much higher in importance by supplier's informants whereas Shared values- characteristic was considered more significant by customers' informants.

In the following two sub-chapters interview and questionnaire answers are reported based on non-structured questions. Thereafter, the author's own business relationship experiences are reviewed in the third sub-chapter.

4.1 Supplier's sales personnel interviews

The first open question is interconnected to the previously explained 19 multi-characteristic argument. The question was raised if there are other characteristics which informants consider necessary or important to create long-term customer-supplier relationship. Honesty and trust with flexibility are reported the most important ones. In addition, it's important to understand big picture which is formed of technical knowledge of the products in addition to environmental technology business generally.

The second question is how trust can be achieved in company and individual levels. Supplier's informants find in company level that trust must be earned. Trust develops with successful deliveries and it is maintained with positive image through keeping promises and maintaining dialog between parties. In personal level, professional interest to customer's needs with honest "keep what you promise" approach develops trust. It is underlined that trust must be "earned" every time in customer interaction.

The third question goes beyond trust if or how the supplier considers the dependence between customer and supplier in customer-supplier relationship. Feeling of being dependent to the other part should be similar to customers and suppliers, but it is important to maintain freedom to choose and decide at the same time because dependence is not necessary a positive characteristic. However, it is considered necessary characteristic when customers and suppliers benefit from it in the relationship.

The fourth question is how trust can be lost to the other party either temporary or permanently. Losing trust temporary can succeed on number of ways but the most important factor is considered unsuccessful delivery, for example being late (significantly). Also, negative personal behaviour with underestimating and diminishing underlying problems reduces trust temporary. Permanent loss of trust can be caused by making mistakes continuously without corrections.

The fifth and last open question gives informant open choice to evaluate trust in customer-supplier relationship. It is reported necessary to remember customers in personal or general celebrations occasions like most important holidays. In practical level every customer contact should be responded promptly without excessive delay, because everyday activities create and maintain trust in customer-supplier relationship.

4.2 Customer experience study

Customer questionnaire contained the same or slightly modified questions than presented to the supplier's informants, see Appendixes. This was done to be able to find comparable data to analyse and understand customer-supplier relationship.

As in the previous 4.1 sub-chapter the first open question is interconnected to 19 multi-characteristic arguments. The question is if there are any other characteristics (than the previous ones) that can be considered necessary in long-term customer-supplier relationship. Informants suggest look carefully at customers' situation to be able to resolve eventual problems with new innovative solutions.

Trust creation in company level is suggested as a straight forward procedure. Every customers and suppliers are expected to keep track on agreed tasks and report immediately any changes. Moreover, collaboration atmosphere is beneficial feel like a one interactive team. Personal level trust creation concentrates to fulfil tasks and obligations as agreed and in honest way. The argument of (positive or negative) dependence between customer and supplier was questioned also from customers' informants. The answers feel the argument rather important but it is difficult to specify it any further.

Thereafter, what is needed to lose trust was asked in temporary and permanent terms. Temporary loss of trust can happen if the agreed tasks are not done as agreed. Hiding eventual problems perhaps with unprofessional behaviour can lead to lose trust temporary. If agreed tasks are not performed properly continuously, dishonestly, or causing significant damages trust can be lost permanently.

Customers' informants explained additional arguments considering trust in customer-supplier relationship. According to their point of view, clear and descriptive commercial documents create a solid foundation for relationship. In more details, informative and descriptive collaboration already from the first contact generates positivity, which initiates trust creation.

4.3 Personal experiences in business-to-business collaboration

This personal experience is collected during 2019, prior to study theoretical knowledge deeper of supplier and customer relationships. The theoretical knowledge is described in literature chapter 2. For the author, business-to-business collaboration was completely new in practical level. Therefore, he did not have any preunderstanding for this study. This personal experience raised interesting views which are presented below and reviewed later in the Analysis- chapter.

First time working in a business-to-business environment was interesting for him. He had never spoken on behalf of a company, always for his own. That changed his mindset instantly. He has always been respectful in what he has been doing, but this time he thought himself that he needed to increase sensibility especially in customer contacts and be super respectful in meetings. In fact, this change was necessary because he was acting on behalf of a company, not for himself.

Before he even knew that he would meet customers personally he spent long periods of time going through old customer information, contacting them via phone and seeking technical and commercial information. At first, he did not understand the significance of this process, but after a while he realized that all technical and commercial information gathered, all customer data and every phone call taught him something. For example, according to his opinion the first 20 phone calls went so badly that he thought not to have any chance of getting somebody listening to him. In fact, they did not have any reason listen to him. He had little or nothing important to tell them. Then he realized what he needed to learn. They did not need listen to him, but he needed listen to THEM.

He went through old customers' information. He spent close to a month going through all customer history data for example about rented and sold machines. Then he updated rel-

evant information in the company's database. Initially, he did not see the fundamental meaning of this work apart from the obvious data update to contact customers easier. But after a while he realized the benefits and continued the work without questioning it.

One day a man walks into our offices. It was lunchtime so most of the personnel had left the building. He welcomed a visitor introducing himself. Soon he realized that this person was a customer who was interested to see the product range and how they work. With little to no experience on face-to-face communication he asked visitor to follow him to the production area. He explained machine after machine what they did and how one could benefit from using them. Thereafter the visitor left company. He was surprised how well it went. Soon he realized that he has been trained to product related skills during his introduction training period when he entered the company. Thus, the product training has been no doubt more than beneficial.

The long-expected day came containing a customer meeting he was anxious about. Before that he had participated customer meetings with colleagues and sometimes with the CEO. On that day, when he was driving to the customer meeting the phone rang. His colleague was on the line sounding sick in his throat saying he is unable participate the agreed customer meeting. After the call he thought to cancel the meeting. But he didn't. He travelled to the meeting place and waited patiently. Suddenly he sees the customer approaching. He calmly introduces himself and tells that this time that he is the only participant from the supplier's side. For the customer this change was not a problem. They started to talk about their current machinery and the eventual problems around it. Soon enough he realized that the customer was a bit evasive. He did not like to be stared in the eyes. Instantly he changed approach and started to look away as they continued talking. The customer seemed more comfortable and they continued talking. After they had gone through the machinery, he suggested assess further planning with his colleague how to continue the sales project. Thereafter, the customer started to tell him about their other machinery in other locations that could need consulting as well. He was thrilled to hear this and responded to be available to meet concerning also other projects. After this case he was more confident to collaborate with customers alone, without any colleague's support.

In the second case he had arranged a customer meeting at their premises a couple of hours drive from the office. At that time, he was still inexperienced to meet customers alone, but he took the commitment. During two-hour drive to the customer he was a bit anxious but still confident. Upon arriving he called the customer's contact person by phone and wanted to announce the arrival time. Customer did not respond the telephone

call. Upon arrival, he noticed the machinery in their premises to discuss about and started to observe. He immediately noticed some arguments they could discuss about. He noticed that the machine was quite old with some damages from heavy use. He suggested that with a bit of bodywork, the engine check-up, a sandblasting of the framework with a new coat of paint would have brought the machine a second life. The customer arrived after a while. He introduced himself and started to ask some questions about the machine. He listened to the customer carefully and thereafter delivered his opinion of the machine. He explained the entire process with detailed steps that would be needed to go through the renewing process. Also, which activities would have been necessary in the meantime when they would not have that machine in service. And what was supposed to happen thereafter. Also, he explained them which eventual risks would realize if this process would not be decided. In sum, entirely new life with half of the costs of a new machine was suggested for more comfortable future with less risk. The customer was happy with the proposed solution. The customer's contact person told that the agreement would need confirmation from the CEO of the company. "When that authorization is clear you will get the order", he said. In the same instance a car arrived from the customer's gates and parked beside as. There was the CEO. He introduced himself, and the CEO instantly remembered a telephone conversation a couple weeks back. After that he explained all the steps in details the machine needed to go through in the suggested rebuild. After a couple of questions The CEO shook his hand and agreed the deal.

In the third case he was checking the data of a very old customer. After assessing their machine and its mechanics he called the customer asking them about it. They said that the machine had worked very well since the day of delivery. This was happy to hear and then he asked if there were any problems with it. The customer responded that there had been some rats wandering around in the area of the machine. This information was suspicious because it was first time to hear about that problem. He told the customer about his suspiciousness and offered to come to visit them. Two days after he went to investigate the situation. Upon arrival he did not notice see any presence of rats, but the machine was in place. Everything seemed good but some fluids were leaking underneath. He explained to the customer that the machine could benefit a lot, extending several years of lifetime and reducing its carbon footprint by going through renewing process that could be offered to them. He also explained the eventual risks if this process would not be gone through. After a couple days of pondering the customer agreed to have the machine rebuilt.

The fourth personal relationship case in business-to-business collaboration was about another old customer that already had two machines in use. The customer had never complained about them. He called them and asked politely how their business was going

and if the machines were helpful for their business. He responded both questions positively. That was happy to hear. He still asked them if he could come by one day and check the machines because of their old age. The customer had nothing against it so he went there two days later. He happened to have other visits in that area during the same day. Upon arrival he recognized the machines instantly. They were old and crusty but hard working. One could see that they had been sitting there for a bit, perhaps most of that company's history. As in the previous cases he ended up to the conclusion to propose customer to rebuild their machinery. That solution was more convenient compared to a new one and carbon footprint would be lower. When thinking about the future, rebuild solution is also sustainable. The logistics, temporary machines for the meantime of renewing process and some bonuses benefited the customer. They were surprised about the amount of work was prepared for them without asking anything in return. Customer decided to accept the offer when they understood the risks and benefits with reasonable expenses.

5 ANALYSIS: EXPECTATIONS OF TRUST IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 The supplier's and customers' informants' expectations

Environmental technology products are important and valuable to customers and their supplier especially from the product's core substance point of view. According to study results the most important expectation is that they keep the waste area clean and hygienic. However, these products influence also in other areas. Especially customers as the machinery users see that machinery saves their money or time or the storage space. This saving potential is raised especially by the machinery users/customers. Interesting question for customers and suppliers is if environmental technology can improve their own or their counterpart's image. Perhaps here resides significant development potential which can affect business to suppliers positively.

The question concerning customer-supplier relationship quality was placed to informants using nineteen literature-based characteristics. The results have been analysed using three groups related to the importance of studied characteristics. The first group (Group 1) of characteristics are defined to be considered similarly very important for the supplier's and customers' informants' perspectives, see results in chapter 4.

The most important characteristic is considered Service quality. This can be understood as the entire sales, delivery and after sales process seem to be the main characteristic in business-to-business relationship. Thereafter, customers and suppliers expect the relationship to be Trustworthy. This characteristic is coming also later in more details in this analysis. Personal contacts are expected to be taken care of professionally. In addition, customers and suppliers expect to fulfil conditions to reach General satisfaction. Personal openness and honesty with Commitment and Courtesy are evenly important characteristic selected by the supplier's and customers' informants.

The second group (Group 2) evaluates characteristics which are similarly least important ones for customer and supplier. The least important one is Having fun. This can be understood from the fact that activities in business-to-business environment concentrates in "hard" products and services important or necessary to customers' own business. Nearly the same low value characteristic is the expectation Being friends. Informality and Socializing are not expected characteristics either.

The third group (Group 3) is interesting one because there are eight characteristics which are considered very important by customer or supplier while the other considers that

characteristic somewhat less important. The biggest difference can be seen in Life-long costs- characteristic. This can be understood so that customers prefer to reveal economic analysis, which consider the importance of costs during full life-time of the machinery. Fairness is also reported as an important characteristic in studied business. Purchase price is also an important characteristic which follows the previously presented customers preferred life-long cost calculations. Also, environmental reasons are considered by customers' informants in higher importance than the supplier's informants. Loyalty is also highly expected characteristic. Interestingly, in contrast to the other preferred characteristics, Financing of the purchase is considered slightly higher by the supplier's informants although the other previously mentioned two economic characteristics were valued higher by customers' informants. Finally, Positivity- and Pleasure- characteristics are preferred a bit higher by customers' informants than the supplier's informants.

Finally, according to this study Reliability- characteristic describes in the strongest way how to create and maintain trust in business-to business relationship. This can be reached through Confidence between customers and suppliers. And confidence can be created as a combination of Communication and Cooperation with personal and company level commitment.

5.2 Author's own initial experiences of customer-supplier relationships

The author's first own experience case demonstrates that he became trusted because of honestly demonstrated human behaviour towards customer and adapted fully to the customer's needs. He collaborated casually and in an appropriate way and tried to avoid any stressful situation. In addition, it seems that he collaborated professionally and demonstrated to know the supplier's line of business.

In the second case the customer's contact person and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) demonstrated trust to the salesperson, because he presented a thorough study about that customer's machine and sustainable development plan for it. He had checked their machine and its environment personally beforehand to be able to explain all needed steps and the future benefits. Also, he was able to respond in a satisfactory way couple of questions customer presented on the spot. It seemed that it did not matter to the customer that the sales person was young and unexperienced.

In the third case the salesperson evaluated and presented to the customer the risks and benefits of what was going on in their machine and what could be done in collaboration to improve the situation. The supplier's problem assessment to the existing machine showed the expertise necessary to present reliable solution to remove the problem. It was im-

portant to present possible benefits and risky outcomes in a humble way. The communication was open, and the customer was willing to dialogue about everything that was going on. Interestingly, in this case, the sales person did not meet the customer personally even once. And still it seemed evident that trusted relationship became possible to generate.

The fourth case the customer was asked the permission for us (supplier) to seek information about their machine situation and assess it. The customer was surprised about the amount of work was invested in researching and finding the best possible outcome for longevity and expense wise for them. There was not possible to meet the customer, but several telephone calls worked fine with them to communicate if there were found something new or to update the situation. It was possible to hear from customer's voice that they appreciated the openness in sharing all necessary information with them. Importantly, our intention as a supplier was to offer the most suitable and feasible solution for the customer without something which either would not have worked or would have been too costly for them.

According to these customer cases it can be understood several aspects. For instance, when meeting or otherwise collaborating with customers, the most important part of it is accepting the situation and trying to understand the human being you are dealing with at that moment. The most significant aspect as a salesperson is to feel comfortable in the situation with customers and make them feel comfortable as well. There are many aspects in human interactions for people to feel at ease. For instance, if one feels uncomfortable being watched in the eyes, do not watch her/him in the eyes but somewhere else. The change makes them feel like you understand and respect them.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was presented in the Introduction chapter to increase the knowledge and understanding of trust in business-to-business customer-supplier relationships. Conclusions are based on the analysis from existing literature (see chapter 2) and three empirical data sources (see chapter 5). The conclusions are made answering the research question: How expectation centric aspects and characteristics influence trust creation, development and eventual disruption in customer-supplier business to business relationships?

6.1 Contribution for sales and procurement managers

The scope of this thesis was to study expectations concerning trust in business-to-business context from three directions: 1) a supplier's sales managers' perspectives, 2) customers opinions, and 3) the author's own experiences. The empirical study concentrated initially to understand customers and a supplier's expectations in business-to-business relationship through literature based influencing characteristics. According to the empirical findings and analysis the outcome demonstrates that the most important characteristic according to environmental technology users is to keep the waste areas clean and hygienic. Similarly important is that the machinery should also offer economic benefits to the user company. The fulfilment of these expectations can influence business positively to customers and suppliers. Moreover, environmental technology user's image can develop positively in the future. Although these business-related aspects were not primarily looked for in this study, the above described results can be considered at least interesting.

Findings in customer-supplier relationships suggest suppliers concentrate in sales, delivery, and after sales activities in a trustworthy way. Cooperation in personal level is expected to be performed professionally. This means that customers and suppliers must know their own business and products well and related information has to be communicated openly and honestly to satisfy both sides. Economy in the form of purchase price and life-long costs are particularly interested by customers. This aspect seems influence strongly to customer-supplier relationship and must be considered by suppliers. Moreover, products' environment aspect is especially highlighted by customers. It is also important to understand that customers prefer to reach loyalty between customers and suppliers in relationship.

6.2 Theoretical implications

Theoretical implication is suggested to complement Gil-Saura et al. (2009) value framework in business-to-business customer-supplier relationships. According to the framework loyalty between customer and supplier can be reached with a combination of trust, commitment and satisfaction. However, trust for trustful relationship can be achieved through reliability and confidence between customer and supplier. In practical terms, communication and cooperation has to be tight and respectful. Moreover, Socialising, Informality, Having fun and Being friends, which were suggested to be valuable characteristics by Holmlund (2008), was not confirmed, at least in this business-to-business context.

To create, develop and maintain trust is achieved when a supplier is cooperating professionally with customers. This reflects everything. For example, it really matters what you are saying and what you are doing in- and outside of your company. To refer one informant who described: "you have to earn trust every time when you are in any kind of relationship with your counterpart". In fact, trust can be lost temporary in case of neglect the tasks which have been agreed upon or hide eventual problems in purpose. These problematic situations can, however, be overcome if the corrective actions are performed without delay in the honest way. If agreed tasks have not executed properly, but perhaps dishonestly in a continuous way, or causing significant damages to the counterpart, trust can be lost permanently.

6.3 Limitations and future research

It must be considered that this study has been made with limited number of data. Therefore, the reliability of the results can be compromised. However, the collected data from literature, customers' informants, a supplier's informants, and the authors' experiences enabled understand the studied argument and answer the research question. Moreover, the at least three-dimensional researched data indicates that the argument presented in the research question is valid.

It seems that this study is meaningful for the companies who intend develop trust in business-to-business customer-supplier relationships. It would be interesting to study the argument of this thesis with broader amount of data. In addition, the studied phenomenon could be interesting study in wider perspective, for instance expanding from customer-supplier relationships to stakeholder networks. Thus, this is suggested for future studies.

SUMMARY

Environmental technology machinery customers operate in variety type of businesses suppliers need to adapt. The question is raised how the customer-supplier relationships develop and maintain in business-to-business environment especially from trust perspective.

Relationship between customers and suppliers has been studied widely also from trust point of view. Consequently, literature suggests number of characteristics and arguments which are used to measure trust in business-to-business relationship, necessary to reach customer expectations. But how the characteristics influence trust development, maintenance and eventual disruption when targeting loyal relationship? Thus, qualitative study was necessary to obtain thorough understanding.

The following research question needed to be answered: How expectation centric aspects and characteristics influence trust creation, development and eventual disruption in customer-supplier business to business relationships? To discover an answer to the research question, the environmental technology supplier's sales personnel and their customers were interviewed personally and via on-line questionnaire. Additionally, the author's native experiences in customer-supplier relationships, before owning theoretical understanding, were collected and analysed.

The results and their analysis disclose that customers' and suppliers' expectations in business-to-business relationship must concentrate in sales, delivery, and after sales activities in a trustworthy way. This means that customers' and suppliers' key personnel must know their own business and products well and related information has to be communicated professionally, openly, and honestly to satisfy both sides. Trust for loyal relationship can be achieved only through reliability and confidence in close cooperation.

Similar study with wider and enhanced views to stakeholders in networks is suggested for deeper understanding of trust in business-to-business relationships.

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APPENDIXES

1. Contact letter/email for supplier's interview informants (in Finnish).
2. Contact questionnaire email for on-line customer (in Finnish).
3. Research brief to attach interviews and on-line customer questionnaire (in Finnish).
4. Interview guide to supplier's informants in (a) English and (b) Finnish.
5. On-line questionnaire to customers in (a) English and (b) Finnish.

APPENDIX 1: Contact letter/email for supplier's interview informants (in Finnish).

Arvoisa toimitusjohtaja,

Viime puhelumme liittyen olen valmistellut saatekirjeen lähetettäväksi projektipäälliköille. Luettuanne saatekirjeen ottaisın mielelläni vastaan palautetta, jos näette siinä jotakin muokattavaa.

Jos se on mielestänne sopiva, niin olisiko mahdollista lähettää saatekirje eteenpäin?

Kuten oli puhetta, tulevalla viikolla _____ olisi erittäin hyvä päivä pitää haastatteluja. Ainakin heidän kanssaan, jotka ovat toimistolla. Olisi mahtavaa, jos saataisiin perjantaiksi mahdollisimman monta haastattelua. Nehän tehdään jokaisen kanssa erikseen, jotta saadaan mahdollisimman erilaisia näkemyksiä esiin.

Olen tavoitettavissanne puhelimitse ja sähköpostitse, jos herää kysyttävää.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Matias Halinoja

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matias.halinoja@student.lab.fi

APPENDIX 2: Contact questionnaire email for on-line customers (in Finnish).

Hei,

Teidät on valittu pohtimaan ja jakamaan kokemuksianne ympäristöteknologiatuotteita toimittavan yhtiön tärkeänä asiakkaana. Alla olevasta linkistä avautuva kysely on välttämätön osa Lahden ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetutkimusta.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää asiakkaan ja toimittajan välistä suhdetta erityisesti luottamuksen näkökulmasta.

Teidän puolella tutkimukseen on valittu vain parhaiten asiaa tuntevat henkilöt. Katso lyhyt Tutkimuskuvauksen liitteenä. Toimittajan puolella tutkimukseen osallistuvat suoraan teillä asiakaskontakteissa toimivat myyjät ja/tai projektipäälliköt.

Tutkimustuloksia analysoitaessa jokaisen siihen osallistuneen henkilötiedot poistetaan, minkä jälkeen tuloksia käsitellään vain tutkimustiedon sisällön perusteella.

Kyselylomakkeeseen pääsette seuraavasta linkistä:

FILL OUT FORM

Kannattaa avata lomake saman tien. Kiitokset panoksestanne jo etukäteen!

Matias Halinoja

LAB Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu

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APPENDIX 3: Research brief to attach interviews and on-line questionnaire (in Finnish).

Tutkimuskuvaus



**“Luottamus B2B asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa
– Ympäristöteknologian liiketoiminta”**

*(“Trust between a customer and a supplier in business-to-business relationships
– Environmental technology business”)*

Asiakkaiden ja toimittajien välinen liiketoiminta nähtiin 1980- luvun alkuun saakka yksittäisinä tapahtumina ja vaihtotilanteina, jossa asiakas tilasi suuriakin teollisia laitteita jotka sitten toimittaja toteutti sopimuksen mukaan. Viime vuosikymmeninä on kuitenkin ymmärretty, että asiakas-toimittaja suhde on paljon moninaisempi kokonaisuus varsinkin silloin kun pyritään pitkäaikaiseen ja kestävään asiakas-toimittaja suhteeseen.

Tämä laadullinen opinnäytetutkimus pyrkii selvittämään luottamuksen merkitystä asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa.

- Ensiksi haastatellaan toimittajan myyjiä ja projektipäälliköitä tämän tieteenalan kirjallisuudesta nousevien kysymysten pohjalta.
- Sen jälkeen asiakkaille lähetetään kysymyksiä, joiden avulla pyritään ymmärtämään asiakkaan näkemykset.
- Kolmannessa osassa tutkija analysoi omia henkilökohtaisia kokemuksia toimittajan myyntiosastolla, jossa hänellä oli mahdollisuus osallistua asiakastyöhön 2019.

Jotta tutkimuksesta tulisi kattava, on toivottavaa että sekä toimittajan että asiakkaiden näkemykset tulisivat mahdollisimman laajasti esille. Siten pyydän, että käyttäisitte pienen hetken paneutumalla ja vastaamalla haastatteluun (toimittaja) ja kyselyyn (asiakkaat).

Kiitokset arvokkaasta panoksestanne jo etukäteen.

Matias Halinoja

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APPENDIX 4 a) Interview guide to supplier's informants in English (original in planning)

Background information

Name (not compulsory), company, date and <u>interview time (min)</u>	
Position in the company?	
How long time have you worked in this company?	
Have you worked earlier for a competitor of waste machinery?	

- 1. How important (valuable) is environmental technology for your customers and their business?** (scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
To save money or time or storage space					
To keep waste area hygienic					
To improve your customer's company image					
other, what?					

- 2. Generally, how important are the following characteristics in customer-supplier relationship (quality)?** (scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Purchase price					
b) Life-long costs					
c) Financing in the purchase					
d) Environmental reasons					

e) General satisfaction					
f) Service quality					
g) Commitment					
h) Personal contacts like discussions and visits					
i) Personal level openness and honesty					
j) Fairness					
k) Loyalty					
l) Courtesy					
m) Trustworthy					
n) Positivity					
o) Pleasure					
p) Socializing					
q) Informality					
r) Having fun					
s) Being friends					

3. Are there any other characteristics that you consider necessary/important to create long-term customer-supplier relationship?

4. Trust in customer-supplier relationships

Trust is considered as a psychological state as interdependence and risk/opportunity, but not behaviour (Kadefors, 2004).

	1	2	3	4	5
How important or valuable do you consider trust?					
a) How trust can be achieved in - company level - individual level					
b) How do you consider dependence between customer and supplier?					
Trust is considered vulnerable (Rousseau, 1988). c) What is needed to lose trust - temporary					
- permanently					

5. Generally, how important are the following characteristics to create and maintain trust? (scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment					
Reliability					
Confidence					
Cooperation					
Functional conflict					
Uncertainty					
Opportunistic behaviour					
Communication (expectations...)					
Shared values, (to maintain high values)					

6. How do you maintain and develop trust in customer-supplier relationship?

7. What do you recommend to your company how to improve your relationship with customers for long-term cooperation?

An example only: to improve their capabilities to resolve customer's problems.

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell the researcher considering trust in customer-supplier relationship?

Thank you for your most valuable opinion!

APPENDIX 4 b) Interview guide to supplier's informants in Finnish (used in interviews).

Taustatietoja

Nimi (ei välttämätön), yrityksen nimi, pvm ja <u>haastattelu</u> aika	
Asema yrityksessä?	
Kuinka kauan olette työskennellyt tällä toimittajalla?	
Oletteko työskennellyt aiemmin jollakin toisella ympäristöteknologia- toimittajalla?	

- 1. Kuinka tärkeä (arvokas) (toimittamanne) ympäristöteknologialaitteet on teidän asiakkaille ja heidän liiketoiminnalleen?** (skaalalla 1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
Jotta säästetään rahaa tai varastointitilaa					
Jotta varastotilat saadaan pidetyksi puhtaina					
Parantaa heidän yrityksensä mainetta					
jotain muuta, mitä?					

- 2. Yleisesti ottaen kuinka tärkeänä pidätte seuraavia asioita asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa (suhteen laadun kannalta)?** (1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Ostohinta					
b) Tuotteen elinkaarikustannukset					
c) Oston rahoitusmahdollisuudet					

d) Yleiset ympäristösyöt					
e) Yleinen tyytyväisyys					
f) Palvelun laatu					
g) Sitoutuminen					
h) Henkilökohtainen kohtaaminen kuten keskustelut ja tapaamiset					
i) Avoimuus ja rehellisyys					
j) Reiluus					
k) Uskollisuus					
l) Kohteliaisuus					
m) Luottamuksellisuus					
n) Positiivisuus					
o) Miellyttävyys					
p) Sosiaalisuus					
q) Epämuodollisuus					
r) Olla kiva					
s) Tulla ystäviksi					

3. Onko olemassa muita ominaisuuksia tai näkökulmia, jotka koette tärkeiksi kun pyritään luomaan pitkäaikainen ja kestävä asiakas-toimittaja suhde?

4. Luottamus asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisessä suhteessa

Luottamusta pidetään riskin ja mahdollisuuksien välisenä psykologisena riippuvuustilana, mutta ei yksilön käyttäytymiseen suoraan liittyvänä (Kadefors, 2004).

	1	2	3	4	5
Kuinka tärkeänä tai arvokkaana pidätte luottamusta?					
a) Kuinka luottamus voidaan saavuttaa - yritystasolla - henkilökohtaisella tasolla					
b) Miten koet asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisen riippuvuuden?					
<i>Luottamus koetaan haavoittuvaksi (Rousseau, 1988).</i>					
c) Kuinka luottamuksen voi menettää tilapäisesti? - pysyvästi?					

5. Yleisellä tasolla kuinka tärkeäksi koette seuraavia tekijöitä kun pyritään luomaan ja ylläpitämään luottamusta? (1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
Sitoutuminen					
Luotettavuus					
Uskottavuus					
Yhteistyö					
Asiaan liittyvä ristiriita					
Epävarmuus					
Opportunistinen käyttäytyminen					
Kommunikointi (toisen osapuolen odotuksiin nähden)					

Jaettu arvomaailma (jotta voisi ylläpitää tärkeitä arvoja)							
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6. Kuinka te toimittajana ylläpidätte ja kehittäte luottamusta asiakkaisiin?

--

7. Mitä ehdotatte yrityksellenne kuinka voisitte kehittää toimittajan ja asiakkaan välistä suhdetta pitkäaikaisen ja kestävä yhteistyön saavuttamiseksi?

Esimerkki: Kehittää tuoteosaaamista asiakkaiden ongelmien ratkaisemiseksi.

--

8. Olisiko jotakin muuta mitä haluatte tuoda esiin luottamuksen rakentamiseksi, ylläpitämiseksi ja kehittämiseksi asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa?

--

Paljon kiitoksia antamistasi erittäin arvokkaista näkemyksistä!

APPENDIX 5 a) On-line questionnaire to customers in English (original in planning).

Background information

Name (not compulsory), company and date	
Personal data - position in the company?	
What is your company's main business?	

- 1. How important/valuable environmental technology equipment is for your company and business?** (scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
To save money or time or storage space					
To keep waste area hygienic					
To improve our own company image					
other, what?					

- 2. How important do you consider the following characteristics in customer-supplier relationship (quality)?** (scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Purchase price					
b) Life-long costs					
c) Financing in the purchase					
d) Environmental reasons					
e) General satisfaction					

f) Service quality					
g) Commitment					
h) Personal contacts like discussions and visits					
i) Personal level openness and honesty					
j) Fairness					
k) Loyalty					
l) Courtesy					
m) Trustworthy					
n) Positivity					
o) Pleasure					
p) Socializing					
q) Informality					
r) Having fun					
s) Being friends					

3. Are there any other characteristics that you consider necessary/important in long-term customer-supplier relationship?

4. Trust in customer-supplier relationships

Trust is considered as a psychological state as interdependence and risk/opportunity, but not behaviour (Kadefors, 2004).

	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

How important or valuable do you consider trust?					
a) How trust can be achieved in - company level					
b) individual level					
c) How do you consider de- pendence between customer and supplier?					
Trust is considered vulnerable (Rous- seau, 1988). d) What is needed to lose trust - temporary					
e) permanently					

5. How important are the following characteristics to create and maintain trust?

(scale 1-5, when 1 is little important and 5 is very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment					
Reliability					
Confidence					
Cooperation					
Functional conflict					
Uncertainty					
Opportunistic behaviour					
Communication (expectations...)					
Shared values, (to maintain high values)					

6. Is there anything else you want to tell the researcher considering trust in customer-supplier relationship?

Thank you for your most valuable opinion!

APPENDIX 5 b) On-line questionnaire to customers in Finnish (utilized version).

Taustatietoja

Nimi (ei välttämätön), yrityksen nimi, pvm	
Asemanne yrityksessä?	
Mikä on yrityksenne pääliiketoiminta?	

1. Kuinka tärkeä/arvokas ympäristöteknologialaitteet on teille ja teidän liiketoiminnalle? (skaalalla 1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
Jotta säästetään rahaa tai varastointitilaa					
Jotta varastotilat saadaan pidetyksi puhtaina					
Parantaa meidän yrityksen mainetta					
jotain muuta, mitä?					

2. Kuinka tärkeänä pidätte seuraavia asioita asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa (suhteen laadun kannalta)? (1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Ostohinta					
b) Tuotteen elinkaarikustannukset					
c) Oston rahoitusmahdollisuudet					
d) Yleiset ympäristösyöt					
e) Yleinen tyytyväisyys					
f) Palvelun laatu					

g) Sitoutuminen					
h) Henkilökohtainen kohtaaminen kuten keskustelut ja tapaamiset					
i) Avoimuus ja rehellisyys					
j) Reiluus					
k) Uskollisuus					
l) Kohteliaisuus					
m) Luottamuksellisuus					
n) Positiivisuus					
o) Miellyttävyys					
p) Sosiaalisuus					
q) Epämuodollisuus					
r) Olla kivaa					
s) Tulla ystäviksi					

3. Onko olemassa muita ominaisuuksia tai näkökulmia, jotka koette tärkeiksi kun pyritään luomaan pitkäaikainen ja kestävä asiakas-toimittaja suhde?

4. Luottamus asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisessä suhteessa

Luottamusta pidetään riskin ja mahdollisuuksien välisenä psykologisena riippuvuustilana, mutta ei yksilön käyttäytymiseen suoraan liittyvänä (Kadefors, 2004).

	1	2	3	4	5
Kuinka <u>tärkeänä tai arvokkaana</u> pidätte luottamusta?					

a) Kuinka luottamus voidaan saavuttaa yritystasolla	
b) henkilökohtaisella tasolla	
c) Miten koette asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisen riippuvuuden?	
<i>Luottamus koetaan haavoittuvaksi (Rousseau, 1988).</i>	
d) Kuinka luottamuksen voi menettää tilapäisesti?	
e) entä pysyvästi?	

5. Kuinka tärkeäksi koette seuraavia tekijöitä kun pyritään luomaan ja ylläpitämään luottamusta? (1-5, kun 1 on merkityksetön ja 5 on erittäin tärkeä)

	1	2	3	4	5
Sitoutuminen					
Luotettavuus					
Uskottavuus					
Yhteistyö					
Asiaan liittyvä ristiriita					
Epävarmuus					
Opportunistinen käyttäytyminen					
Kommunikointi (toisen osapuolen odotuksiin nähden)					
Jaettu arvomaailma (jotta voisi ylläpitää tärkeitä arvoja)					

6. Olisiko jotakin muuta mitä haluatte tuoda esille luottamuksesta asiakkaan ja toimittajan välisissä suhteissa?



Paljon kiitoksia antamistasi erittäin arvokkaista näkemyksistä!