

MULTIPLE AND ASYMMETRIC PERCEPTIONS OF TRUST

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ABSTRACT

There are still certain trust domains that have not been explored sufficiently, such as the measurement and evaluation of multiple informants and asymmetric interactions of mutual trust in service encounters. This means that only the buyer's or seller's perspective has usually been taken into consideration. Furthermore, only matched pairs of buyer's and seller's perceptions have been generally explored. Finally, multiple informants are rarely used in quantitative trust research, if at all.

It is argued that multiple informants should be used in the measurement and evaluation of the relationship properties of mutual trust in service encounters and, symmetric, as well as asymmetric, interactions of mutual trust in dyadic contexts should be considered. Therefore, an application of the perceptual bi-directionality-method, i.e. the PBD-method, is introduced in this context to measure and evaluate the relationship properties of mutual trust in the context of one-to-one and multiple informants, as well as the symmetric and asymmetric interactions, in service encounters.

Consequently, there is an apparent lack of mutuality, asymmetry and multiplicity in the measurement and evaluation of trust in service encounters. The measurement and evaluation of the relationship properties of mutual trust in dyadic contexts are a methodological challenge. Furthermore, this challenge becomes more complicated when multiple informants and asymmetric interactions are taken into consideration simultaneously. In consequence, the research question has been formulated as follows: "How can the relationship properties of mutual trust in a specific service encounter with multiple informants and asymmetric interactions be measured and evaluated?" The objective of this research is therefore to describe and apply a method with which to measure and evaluate mutual trust in service encounters with both one-to-one and multiple informants, as well as symmetric and asymmetric interactions.

There are three major reasons that motivate the present methodological research development in terms of mutuality, asymmetry, and multiplicity. In the first place, the measurement and evaluation of mutual trust in service encounters need further exploration and contribution. Mutual trust contains interactive and dynamic relationship properties, whose outcome depends upon both the buyer's and seller's perceptions in service encounters. This means that the relationship properties of mutual trust in dyadic contexts are affected by the bi-directionality between the seller's and buyer's perceptions. Therefore, the measurement and evaluation of mutual trust are influenced by the interactive and dynamic relationship properties in service encounters. Secondly, the measurement and evaluation of mutual trust in service encounters between two actors is often based upon two involved informants' perceptions of each other. Therefore, most research of mutual trust in service encounters involves relationships between just two people, i.e. one-to-one informants. Thirdly, research has so far been limited to examining matched pairs of informants in order to measure and evaluate the mutuality of relationship properties of trust. The contribution of this research is the PBD-method that may be used to measure and evaluate multiple key informants' in asymmetric interactions of mutual relationship properties in dyadic contexts, instead of only matching one-to-one key informants in symmetric interactions.