

# **Antecedents of Trust in B2B Buying Process A Literature Review**

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is known that trust has a considerable power in maintaining a long-term relationship between the partners, which in the end can be beneficial for both parties. While it is not unfamiliar to discuss the importance of trust, yet some organizations are still chaotic with the concept of trust and the antecedents of trust itself. The purpose of this research is to give a clear view to organizations as well as managers regarding the concept of trust and the antecedents in creating or forming trust with other partners. This work covers a critical literature review of well-established theories in this research field, analysis them and come up with applicable frameworks. Based on the review, two frameworks regarding antecedents of trust were made. The first framework separates between the antecedents of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust, while the second one distinguishes between the antecedents of initial and gradual trust. As this paper focuses on b2b buying process, hence only the antecedents from inter-organizational level were taken into account. Afterwards, based on the antecedents of inter-organizational trust, the classification between initial and gradual trust were made. It is argued that initial trust happens before the first-hand experience while gradual trust happens after repeated interaction, hence the examples of the antecedents of initial trust consists of firm's size, brand, reputation, power, while the antecedents of gradual trust are willingness to customize, length of relationship, perceived quality. However, the frameworks proposed are still subject to be tested by empirical research.

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## **Keywords**

trust, business-to-business (B2B) buying process, conceptualization, antecedents, interpersonal, inter-organizational, initial trust, gradual trust

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, trust is regarded as one of the most important concepts in most of academic study, ranging from healthcare, psychology, behavior, organization, and marketing literature. Moreover, the emerging of e-commerce in the area of marketing increases the popularity of trust in academic study, and consequently makes the concept of trust more important, especially in business area. Due to increasing popularity of trust in academic literature, many researchers have come up with different contexts and definitions of trust. In fact, most findings still focus on one element that fosters the interpersonal relationship, which defined trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Zhang & Chelladurai, 2013). They argued that the notion of vulnerability refers to the risk that is possible if the trustee does not live up to expectations (Zhang & Chelladurai, 2013).

However, Ozawa & Sripad (2013) argued that the concept of trust itself has always been regarded as ambiguous and fuzzy and thus difficult to define and investigate. This might be due to the fact that academy study of trust has so many nuances, which makes it hard to come up with universal definition for trust. Undoubtedly, Hobbs & Goddard (2015) found that in one study of Krammer and Tyler, sixteen different definitions of trust were proposed. Besides, research on trust has been focusing so far in the business to customer (B2C), rather than business-to-business (B2B) area (Canavari, Fritz, Hofstede, Matopoulos, & Vlachopoulou, 2010). This might be due to the fact that the later is the most important for companies. As a consequence, the concept of trust in business-to-business context is rather uncovered in recent literatures and therefore a clearer conceptualization of trust is needed.

In addition to it, scholars frequently postulate trust as perceptions and beliefs of customers toward either organizations or individuals, making it function as an antecedent or consequent variable in a model. This is supported by the findings from Kingshott; Narayandas and Rangan (as cited by Chowdhury, 2012) which stated that trust plays a basic role in developing and maintain successful B2B relationship. This makes it clear that most of recent literatures focus on trust solely as an antecedent or consequent variable rather than on the antecedents of trust itself. While the literature mainly examines trust as an antecedent or consequent variable, focusing on the antecedents of trust itself might actually be more important point to note. There have been some studies regarding the antecedents of trust, but the content itself is rather broad and not segmented, and therefore it would be optimal to provide a clear and comprehensive framework regarding the antecedents of trust in B2B buying process.

Although emotional values such as trust has been perceived as irrational and was expected to have a small effect in B2B buying process, trust actually has a significant role when it comes to the perceptions of the customers (Anderson, Kaplar, & Selö, 2013). As trust is becoming a significant issue, it is no doubt that there is an increasing need of reviewing effort in monitoring the research status. That is exactly what this research aims to achieve. The blurred view of trust and broad range of antecedents make it difficult to identify the most important trigger for improving trust between organizations. Therefore, a more coherent conceptualization, and a clearer framework for antecedents of trust are needed to make trust research more solid and productive.

To be able to accomplish the research goal mentioned above, the following research question will be answered in this paper: *What are the antecedents of trust in the B2B buying process?* By undertaking a critical literature review of well-established literature from familiar journals, the lists of antecedents of trust are provided in this paper. Next, a clear differentiation between interpersonal and inter-organizational level of trust is made to make the reader aware that different level requires different antecedents of trust. As this paper focuses on B2B context, only antecedents of inter-organizational level are taken into consideration and are classified into antecedent of initial and gradual trust. The classification between the antecedents of initial and gradual trust aims to distinguish between the actors involved (familiar vs unfamiliar). Afterwards, the conclusion and the discussion part of this paper will provide the reader with a dense understanding of the conceptualization and antecedents of trust in different nuances, mainly interpersonal & inter-organizational level and gradual & initial trust. Last but not least, limitation and future direction towards trust in business-to-business level are presented.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research question, the literature review will be conducted. This literature review aims to give in-depth insight about the topic of trust. In this research, secondary data is being used in the form of journals and scientific articles. The secondary data is generated from well-known online databases as ScienceDirect, Google Scholar and Scopus which provides recognized journals like, 'Journal of Interactive Marketing', 'Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services' and 'Journal of Business Research'. In order to gather scientific articles that are related to our research, keywords like 'trust', 'antecedents of trust' and 'effect of trust in B2B buying processes' are being used to find appropriate scientific articles. Besides, snowball technique is applied. Snowballing is the process whereby new articles are retrieved from previous relevant articles, and hence articles relating to the topic can be detected. After finding related articles, selection is done based on its abstract to make sure that the articles are related to this research. Afterwards, the articles are read and the content is summarized in order to make a literature matrix. Based on the literature matrix, the most suitable articles are being shortlisted. This literature matrix is then used as the basis of this paper since the content of literature matrix include the name of the author, year, abstract, and summary. To summarize the finding into one simple table, similar findings are grouped into one category and placed in logically order from the most cited findings to the least cited findings, as seen in Table 1; e.g. since expertise cited by the most authors as the antecedents of trust, hence it is placed in the first order in the table. Next, the classification between antecedents of interpersonal and inter-organizational level is made. This classification aims to clarify the antecedents of trust in terms of business-to-business buying process. As seen in Figure 1, only the antecedents that belong to inter-organizational level and both level are considered because this paper focuses on business-to-business buying process. Lastly, based on the antecedents of trust for inter-organizational level, the separation between initial trust and gradual trust is made. This separation is made because the conceptualization of trust in this paper emphasis on dual facet; which are belief and behavior. By referring to previous findings from other researchers, the classification between initial and gradual trust can be successfully accomplished.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Definitions of Trust

This section discusses about definitions of trust by reviewing the articles ranging from psychology, marketing, marketing research, industrial management, and tourism management studies. Although scholars have been conceptualized trust for more than a decade, they have not come up with a universally settled definition yet (Wang, Law, Hung, & Guillet, 2014). Besides, most recent literatures regarding trust focus on either business to consumer or business-to-business orientation. Differences between business to consumer and business-to-business in terms of trust correspond with the differences between interpersonal and inter-organizational trust. While business to consumer focuses more on interpersonal trust, business-to-business focuses on inter-organizational trust. However, some literatures still do not differentiate between these two types of trust and tend to use the definition of trust in mix condition. As an example, a study by Ganesan (1994), which focused on examining interpersonal trust between buyer and seller, but used the definition of inter-organizational trust from Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande (1992). Consequently, the concept of trust itself remains unclear and ambiguous and thus more precise and distinguishable definition of trust is discussed shortly below to avoid confusion for the reader.

From more than a decade, researchers have examined trust at two different level, mainly organizational level and interpersonal level. This distinction is important because research shows that the conceptualization of trust may be different at the firm level, than at the personal level (Macintosh, 2009). This is supported by the work of Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone (1998) who differentiate between interpersonal trust & inter-organizational trust in their studies and discovered that the main difference between interpersonal and inter-organizational trust is the object of trust. While the object of trust in interpersonal level is the member of partner organization, in the inter-organizational level the object is the partner organization itself. Additionally, Doney and Cannon's research (1997) argued that trust of the inter-organizational result from a more calculative process, while trust of the interpersonal result from predictability and benevolent intentions.

Zaheer et al. (1998) defined inter-organizational trust as the extent of trust placed in the partner organization by the members of a focal organization, which are based on three components; reliability, predictability, and fairness. Based on Ring and Van de Ven, this conceptualization provides two general definitions of trust; confidence or predictability in one's expectations about another's behavior, and confidence in another's goodwill (as cited in Zaheer et al., 1998). This definition also referred to the most widely cited definition by Moorman et al. (1992), who defined inter-organizational trust as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. They considered that the conceptualization of trust has dual facet, which composed of belief and behavior (Moorman et al., 1992). Opposite to this view came from Morgan & Hunt (1994) who defined trust as existing when party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. They argued that instead of having dual facet, the behavior intention should be excluded and hence only belief played an important role in conceptualizing trust. Similar to this view is a study by Doney and Canon (1997) who defined trust as a perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust. In this conceptualization, they believed that the behavioral facet is implicitly included in a partner's attributes and for parsimony consideration behaviors should not be encompassed in defining trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Following inter-organizational level, Tomkins's study (as cited in Laaksonen, Pajunen, &

Kulmala, 2008) defined trust as "a belief by one party in a relationship that the other party will not act against his or her interest, where this belief is held without undue doubt or suspicion and in the absence of detailed information about the actions of the other party" (p. 165). Based on Laaksonen et al. (2008), Tomkins's conceptualization highlights the fact that in an inter-organizational relationship, the opportunistic behavior of other party and uncertainty is always there and can never be removed.

Although most researchers have examined trust at the organizational level, some examined trust at interpersonal level (e.g. Ganesan, 1994; Macintosh, 2009; Zaheer et al., 1998). Zaheer et al. (1998) discovered that interpersonal trust has the same elements as inter-organizational trust- reliability, predictability, and fairness- but with an individual as both the referent and origin of trust. Prior to Zaheer et al study, Ganesan (1994) found that the importance aspect of inter-personal definition is the notion of trust as a belief, a sentiment or an expectation about an exchange partner that results from the partner's expertise, reliability, and intentionality. This definition clearly shows two distinct components; credibility and benevolence. He defined credibility as a belief that partner has a required expertise, while benevolence as a belief that partner has intention & motives that is beneficial to us. From the survey study of 124 retail buyers and 52 vendors, he found that someone will be trusted if their actions are perceived as benevolent although his/her credibility is less than perfect (Ganesan, 1994).

Regardless interpersonal and inter-organizational level, Chowdhury (2012) in his literature review study concluded the dimensions used to measure trust; which consists of benevolence and credibility; integrity; reliability; predictability, fairness; honesty, competence, goodwill, and constancy. Those dimensions are a combination from other researchers ranging from 1972 to 2008. Moreover, trust is considered as not an immutable attitude, whether in interpersonal or in organizational level (Hobbs & Goddard, 2015). However, it is still believed that trust is an important mediating relationship variable that has been found to be related to a number of positive outcomes such as commitment, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, both at the interpersonal level and inter-organizational level (Macintosh, 2009). Besides, Sako 's work distinguished three types of trust; contractual, competence trust, and goodwill (as cited in Laaksonen et al., 2008). Contractual type of trust rests on an assumption that the other party will carry out its oral and written agreement, while competence type of trust concerns partner's ability to perform according to these agreements. These two types of trust can be categorized under inter-organizational level of trust, whereas goodwill is more likely found in interpersonal level of trust since it focuses on partner's intentions to perform in accordance with an agreement. Contrast with Sako's work, Hobbs & Goddard (2015) classified trust into broad categories such as institutional trust (trust in regulatory system), generalized trust (trust in others), calculative trust (rational evaluation that others are likely to behave in a way that does not cause harm for their own interests), and relational trust (derived over time based on interactions between the trustor and trustee and could derive from familiarity and experience).

#### 3.2 Antecedents of Trust

Based on reviewing past and current literature regarding trust, thirty-four antecedents can be identified. In this section, researchers that came up with similar antecedents are categorized into one category. In Table 1, the antecedents of trust are arranged in orderly manner from the most commonly cited to the less commonly cited. Regardless of interpersonal

and inter-organizational level, the most ten widely cited antecedents of trust are expertise, reputation, experience, frequency of interaction, information sharing, similarity & likeability, integrity, dependability, length of relationship, and firm's size. From reviewing 17 articles, these ten antecedents of trust are cited by more than four authors. In contrast, only four or less authors cite the remaining twenty-four antecedents of trust. These remaining antecedents are relationship specific investments (RSIs), communication, relational norm,

willingness to customize, power, benevolence (e.g. receptivity, empathy), personality traits, perceived quality, institutional factors (e.g. regulation, firm association), attributes (e.g. ethnicity, gender, family background), word-of-mouth, satisfaction, opportunism, shared value, familiarity, bonding strategies, recommendation, brands, selling techniques, face-to-face interaction, flexibility, and friendliness. Table 1 provides summary of all thirty-four antecedents together with the author(s).

**Table 1. Antecedents of trust (from the most commonly cited to the less commonly cited)**

<b>Antecedents of Trust</b>	<b>Author (s)</b>
Expertise	(Chéron, Hallegatte, Takahashi, Hamaoka, & Oh, 2000; Chowdhury, 2012; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Graf, Roberts, & Guiot, 2011; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008; Macintosh, 2009; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McCabe & Sambrook, 2014; Swan, Bowers, & Richardson, 1999)
Reputation	(Barney & Hansen, 1994; Chéron et al., 2000; Ganesan, 1994; Graf et al., 2011; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015; Swan et al., 1999; Zucker, 1986)
Experience	(Ganesan, 1994; Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998; Kim et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 1995; McCabe & Sambrook, 2014; Zucker, 1986)
Frequency of interaction	(Chéron et al., 2000; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015; Swan et al., 1999)
Confidential information sharing/Mutual self-disclosure	(Chéron et al., 2000; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008; Macintosh, 2009; Swan et al., 1999)
Similarity & Likeability	(Barney & Hansen, 1994; Chéron et al., 2000; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008)
Integrity (Honestly, Loyalty, Fairness, Reliable)	(Graf et al., 2011; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; McCabe & Sambrook, 2014; Swan et al., 1999)
Dependability	(Kareem Abdul, Gaur, & Peñaloza, 2012; Macintosh, 2009; Mayer et al., 1995; Swan et al., 1999)
Length of relationship	(Chéron et al., 2000; Graf et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2008; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015)
Firm's size	(Chéron et al., 2000; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008)
Relationship specific investment (RSIs)	(Chéron et al., 2000; Chowdhury, 2012; Ganesan, 1994; Swan et al., 1999)
Communication	(Chowdhury, 2012; McCabe & Sambrook, 2014; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015)
Relational norm	(Chowdhury, 2012; Kareem Abdul et al., 2012; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015)
Willingness to customize	(Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jemaa & Tournois, 2009; Kim et al., 2008)
Power	(Chéron et al., 2000; Graf et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2008)
Personality traits	(Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Kim et al., 2008; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015)
Benevolence (Receptivity, Empathy)	(Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Mayer et al., 1995)
Perceived quality (product, service, information)	(Kareem Abdul et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2008)
Institutional factors (Regulations, Firm association, the threat of sanctions)	(Nilsson & Mattes, 2015; Zucker, 1986)
Attributes (Ethnicity, Gender, Race, Family background)	(Swan et al., 1999; Zucker, 1986)
Word-Of-Mouth	(Barney & Hansen, 1994; Kim et al., 2008)
Satisfaction with past outcomes	(Ganesan, 1994; Swan et al., 1999)
Opportunism	(Chowdhury, 2012; Morgan & Hunt, 1994)
Shared values	(Chowdhury, 2012; Morgan & Hunt, 1994)
Familiarity	(Kim et al., 2008; Macintosh, 2009)
Bonding Strategies	(Chowdhury, 2012)
Referral, Recommendation, Feedback	(Kim et al., 2008)
Brands	(Zucker, 1986)
Selling Techniques	(Swan et al., 1999)
Face-to-Face interaction	(Nilsson & Mattes, 2015)
Flexibility	(Graf et al., 2011)
Friendliness	(Chéron et al., 2000)



## 4. ANALASYS

### 4.1 Conceptualization of Trust

As this paper focuses on the business-to-business relationship, the most relevant conceptualization in defining trust would be generalized under the concept of inter-organizational level. Although interpersonal and inter-organizational sometimes correlate with each other, the difference between these two are quite significant (Macintosh, 2009). As noted before, the main difference between interpersonal and inter-organizational trust lies on the object of trust (Zaheer et al., 1998). Since the focus on this paper is on the business-to-business buying process, hence the object of trust lies on the partner organization itself.

Although many researchers have come up with different definition and antecedents of trust, none of them have clearly conceptualize and differentiate between the antecedents of initial trust and gradual trust. Most of past literatures tend to mix the antecedents of trust without considering whether it happens after or before the first-hand experience between the involved actors. Therefore, to give a clear understanding for the reader, the separation between initial trust and gradual trust are needed and hence the conceptualization of trust follows the definition of Moorman et al. (1992). They defined inter-organizational trust as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. In this definition, they argued that trust has dual facet, which are belief and behavior. These dual facets are relevant for the categorization between initial trust and gradual trust because it involves not only belief but also behavior aspect. In classifying initial and gradual trust, behavior aspect plays as an important factor to determine the first-hand experience between the actors involved. It is known that the factors influencing the creation of initial trust do not stem from any direct personal interaction between the trustor and trustee while the factors influencing the creation of gradual trust stem from first-hand experience (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015). Thus, it can be concluded that the antecedents of initial trust consists of belief aspect while the antecedents of gradual trust consists of behavior aspects.

### 4.2 Frameworks of Antecedents of Trust in B2B Relationships

#### 4.2.1 Categorization of Antecedents of Interpersonal and Inter-organizational Trust

Research shows that the antecedents of trust may be different at the firm level, than at the personal level (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Macintosh, 2009), hence the classification regarding the antecedents of trust from the list on Table 1 above is needed. This classification is required since some of the antecedents of trust for inter-organizational level might not suitable for interpersonal level, and vice versa. However, there are also some of the antecedents that can work both for inter-organizational level and/or interpersonal level. Figure 1 provides detailed classification for inter-organizational and interpersonal level regarding the antecedents of trust.

On the one hand, there are some antecedents of trust such as personality traits, attributes (e.g. gender, ethnicity, family background), and face-to-face interaction that can only suitable for interpersonal level and not for inter-organizational level. This is supported by the finding of Henthorne, LaTour, & Williams (1992) who argued that personality traits and attributes such as gender, ethnicity, and race are categorized under “person prototypes” that belongs to individual person. For face-to-face interaction, it is obvious that this antecedent is only suitable for interpersonal level as it happens between two or more individuals and not between two or more organizations. It is true that face-to-face interaction can occur within an organization where two or more members within the organization itself interact with each other, but not between two organizations.

On the other hand, there are also some antecedents of trust that are more suitable for inter-organizational level, such as firm’s size, relationship specific investments, relational norm, willingness to customize, perceived quality, institutional factors, word-of-mouth, opportunism, bonding strategies, referral, brands, and selling techniques.

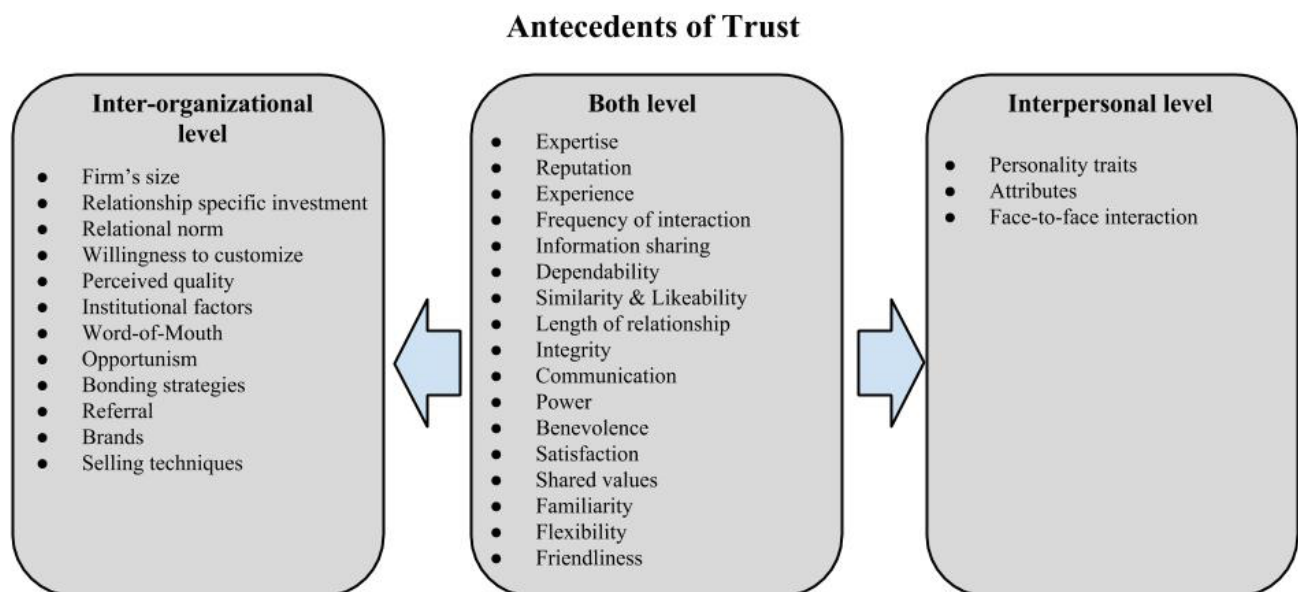


Figure 1. Categorization of antecedents of trust

It is obvious that firm's size belongs to organizational level as it is determined by the investment in R&D and market size (Kumar, Rajan, & Zingales). Moreover, based on Chéron et al. (2000), willingness to customize and specific investment are defined as an investment in specific manufacturing (e.g. equipment, people) by supplier to meet the demand of buyers and thus it is clear that the relationship of specific investment happens between two organizations, mainly supplier firm and buyer firm. Similarly, perceived quality occurs at organizational level because it defines the quality of firm's product and service. Normally, from the perceived quality arise the perception of brands, word-of-mouth, and referral. As defined by Association (1995), brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other features that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from other sellers. It is used to identify one item or for the firm as a whole and not for single person identification. In the same way, bonding strategies and selling techniques occur at the organizational level. This is supported by Gounaris (2005) who stated that bonding strategies consists of two elements; structural bond and social bonds, in which the structural bonds are corporate level ties resulting from economic, technical, time-based, knowledge, or other similar reason. Additionally, as two or more firms are in relationships, it sometimes takes a course of action that is not only self-serving, but also harmful to the partner. Such behavior is called opportunism in B2B relations (Hawkins, Wittmann, & Beyerlein, 2008). While previous antecedents at organizational level concern about the organization itself, relational norm and institutional factors occur not within and/or about the organization itself, rather it concern about the external environment surrounding the organization. Based on Bachman & Zaheer (2006), institutional factors reside in a legal framework and commonly accepted standards and rules of accepted business behavior in a system. As the legal framework regulate accepted business behavior between organization-consumer as well as organization-organization, hence it is suitable as antecedents of trust at organizational level rather

than at interpersonal level.

As the preceding paragraph concern either the antecedents of trust at interpersonal level or inter-organizational level, this paragraph discuss the lists of antecedents of trust that work both at the interpersonal level and inter-organizational level. These include expertise, reputation, experience, frequency of interaction, information sharing, dependability, similarity & likeability, length of relationship, integrity & benevolence, communication, power, satisfaction, shared values, familiarity flexibility, and friendliness. Those antecedents are relevant both at the inter-organizational level and interpersonal level due to the fact that all of them can be occurred between individual-individual, individual-organization, and organization-organization relationships.

#### 4.2.2 Antecedents of Initial and Gradual Trust

##### Initial Trust

In section, trust is distinguished between initial trust and gradual trust. This distinction is based on the interaction between unfamiliar versus familiar actor (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). They explained unfamiliar actors as the actors who have little information about, or have not established affective bonds with one another, whereas familiar actors as the actors who have accumulated meaningful knowledge about, or established affective bonds with one another (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). From that differentiation, initial trust sometimes referred to as swift trust and can be classified as happens between unfamiliar actors, in which the actors have little or no information about each other or when the information they have does not come from first-hand personal experience (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015). Furthermore, Yi, Yoon, Davis, & Lee (2013) add that initial trust refers to trust formation in a relationship where the customer does not yet have credible information about, or affective bondage with, the information provider. They argued that initial trust forms during the first encounter and within a short amount of time.

### Antecedents of Initial and Gradual Trust in B2B Buying Process

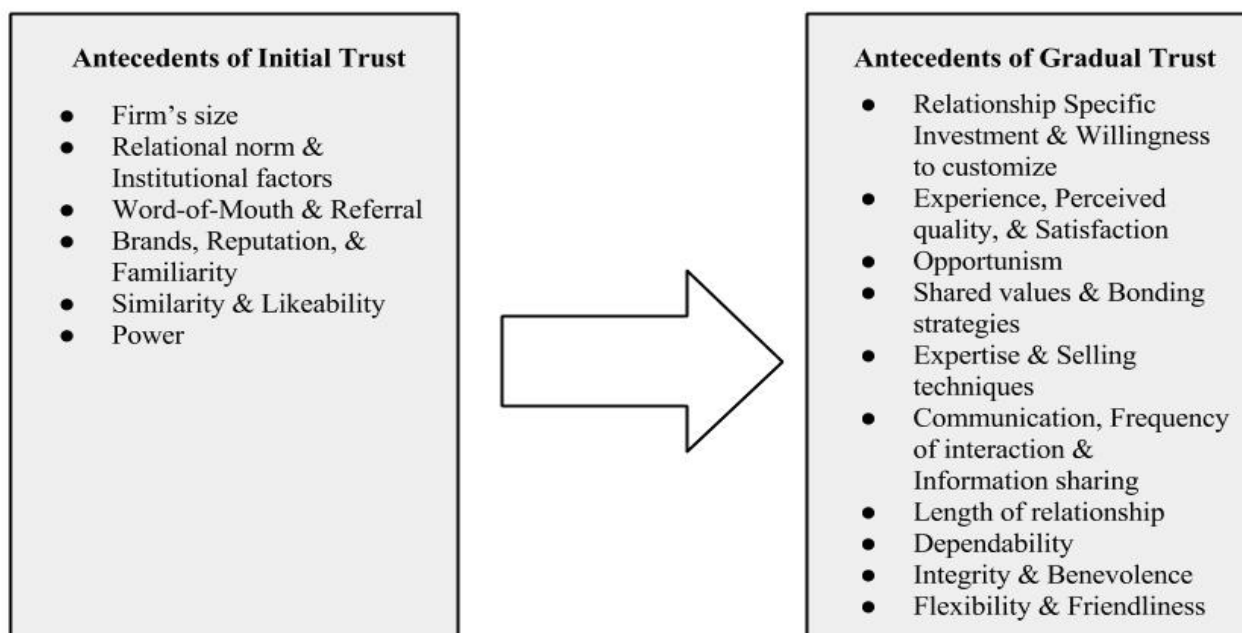


Figure 2. Antecedents of initial trust and gradual trust

**Antecedents of initial trust.** Based on the categorization of antecedents of trust in Figure 1, the classification of initial and gradual trust is made in Figure 2. The factors influencing the creation of initial trust are impersonal which means that they do not stem from any direct personal interaction between the trustor and trustee, which explains why the resulting trust often remains rather fragile (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013). Since initial trust do not stem from any direct personal interaction and forms within a short amount of time, the antecedents of initial trust consists of firm's size, relational norm & institutional factors, word-of-mouth & referral, brands, reputation, & familiarity, similarity & likeability, and power. Those antecedents are classified as antecedents of initial trust because the information is not necessarily come from first-hand personal experience, e.g. the information regarding firm's size, brands, and reputation can be obtained from other informant or secondary sources in the sense that they do not necessarily come from first-hand personal experience.

#### Gradual Trust

Gradual trusts on the other hand develop on the basis of repeated first-hand interaction over time (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015). As actors gain experience with and information about their partners, the commonly shared knowledge and stereotype become less important. The key factors that were crucial for initial trusts are now successively replace by first-hand and actor-specific experience from previous exchange (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015). As a consequence, gradual trust may thus be based on the experience-based, which then result on greater ability to predict the behavior of another.

**Antecedents of gradual trust.** Likewise initial trusts, the antecedents of gradual trust in Figure 2 were based on the categorization of antecedents of trust from Figure 1. As explained before, the factors influencing the creation of gradual trust are based on first-hand experience and forms after repeated experience, hence it consists of willingness to customize, experience & perceived quality, opportunism, shared values & bonding strategies, expertise & selling techniques, communication, frequency of interaction & information sharing, length of relationship, dependability, integrity & benevolence, flexibility & friendliness. However, it is important to note that opportunism behavior result on negative effect in the creation of gradual trust. As willingness to customize appear after first-hand experience, thus it is clear that relationship specific investment and willingness to customize are classified under the antecedents of gradual trust. Similarly, perceived quality and building a bonding strategy can only happen after the actors involved in first-hand experience. In addition, Nilsson & Mattes (2015) clearly argued that both the length of the relationship and the frequency of interaction are important antecedent conditions facilitation the creation of gradual trust because repeated relationship and frequent communication over time gives the actors first-hand experiences that lead to either the gradual creation of trust between actors. Likewise, dependability, integrity, flexibility, and friendliness are the antecedents of gradual trust since it can be felt only after the first-hand experience between the actors involved.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study examines the topic of trust in terms of business-to-business buying process by reviewing the trust theories from a broad range of academic disciplines. Firstly, the concept of trust was discussed and examined in order to clarify the definition and conceptualization of trust in terms of business-to-business context. The findings from this review classified between interpersonal and inter-organizational trust as the conceptualization of trust. The difference between those two

lies on the object of trust. While the object of trust in interpersonal level is the member of partner organization, in the inter-organizational level the object is the partner organization itself. Since this paper focuses on business-to-business context, hence the most suitable conceptualization of trust adopts the notion of inter-organizational trust. Moorman et al. (1992) defined inter-organizational trust as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. They considered that the conceptualization of trust has dual facet, which composed of belief and behavior. Moreover, this definition is relevant because the dual facets of belief and behavior play an important part in differentiating between the antecedents of initial and gradual trust.

Secondly, the antecedents of trust were listed as seen in Table 1. Those antecedents were generated by reviewing 17 literatures and put in logically order from the most cited antecedents to the less cited. From the list of antecedents in Table 1, the classification between the antecedents of inter-organizational trust and interpersonal trust was made. As this paper follows the inter-organizational conceptualization, hence the antecedents of trust concern only those that belong to inter-organizational level. From the list of antecedents in Table 1, only personality traits, attributes, and face-to-face interaction are excluded because those antecedents of trust belong to interpersonal level. Afterwards, the remaining antecedents of trust that belong to inter-organizational level were classified into two broad levels, mainly antecedents of initial trust and antecedents of gradual trust.

Classification between initial trust and gradual trust is important because it explains when, who, and how trust is formed. While initial trust happens between unfamiliar actors and does not come from first hand personal experience, gradual trust happens between familiar actors and based on repeated first-hand interaction over time. Moreover, initial trust forms within a short amount of time while gradual trust needs a relatively long period of time. Based on the analysis in this paper, the categorization for antecedents of initial trust and gradual trust were made, as seen in Figure 2. It can be concluded that firm's size, relational norms, word-of-mouth, brands, familiarity, similarity, and power are the antecedents of initial trust because they can be obtained from other informant or secondary sources in the sense that they do not necessarily come from first-hand personal experience. For gradual trust, the antecedents are willingness to customize, experience & perceived quality, opportunism, shared values & bonding strategies, expertise & selling techniques, communication, frequency of interaction & information sharing, length of relationship, dependability, integrity & benevolence, flexibility & friendliness. These are categorized under the antecedents of trust in the sense that those stem after first-hand experience and can be felt only after the first-hand experience between the actors involved.

## **5.1 Implications for Practice**

This study aims to give a comprehensive view of trust in inter-organizational area, specifically in determining the role of trust, what trust is, and what the antecedents of trust are in B2B buying process. Give a clear and comprehensive review about past studies can benefit organization in understanding the role of trust and identifying the antecedents of trust that can be used as a basis of improving trust in B2B buying process. Moreover, a clear framework on antecedents of trust is provided to help manager identify the most influencing triggers for trust. Besides, the framework in Figure 2 distinguishes between the antecedents of initial trust and gradual trust, which can help manager to analyze the critical drivers in building a trustful relationship in different situation. Thus, the framework in this

paper can be applied to all organizations that intend to make a long-term and trustful relationship between their partners.

## 5.2 Implications for Theory

It would be of academic significance to summarize and compare the results of different studies as it can clarify certain issues of conceptualization, operationalization and antecedents of trust in B2B buying process. By providing a profound critical review and analysis of the conceptualization and antecedents of trusts, this paper can be considered to add value to the existing literature. Although many researchers have come up with some lists of antecedents of trust, they tend to mix up all the antecedents of trust without separating between interpersonal and inter-organizational level and between initial trust and gradual trust. It is clear that the classification is important as research shows that the antecedents of trust may be different at the firm level, than at the personal level, and hence applying the correct antecedents are necessary to ensure the survival of the company. Beside separating between the antecedents of interpersonal and inter-organizational level, the classification between the antecedents of initial trust and gradual trust is also vital because it differentiates between whom, when, and how the trust is created. Therefore, the frameworks that differentiate between the antecedents of initial and gradual trust are also presented in this paper and can be considered to contribute in academic relevance.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study undergoes from several limitations that should also be considered. The study outlines the importance of trust, the concept and the antecedents of trust. It has been seen that the antecedents of trust are not limited to what is mentioned in this paper and hence there are some other antecedents that has not been discussed in this paper. Besides, both the analysis on antecedents of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust (Figure 1) and the antecedents of initial and gradual trust (Figure 2) were merely based on scientific theoretical papers and studies performed by other researchers, which indicates that secondary data in form of peer-reviewed journal articles was reviewed limiting the analysis of data to published resources. Next, only articles written in English have been evaluated, which may narrow the perspectives and thus limit the impact on the underlying theories. Since the paper focuses on reviewing other literatures, it means that it is conducted only by a desk research, and hence the practicality of this research is subject to be tested by empirical research. Limited field researches conducted make the frameworks lack of reliability. Although this literature review uses most high ranking journals that can be considered to have a relatively high validity, there still a need to test the reliability of the frameworks by conducting an empirical research for future research, such as focus group or interview. By empirically testing the framework in practice, a valuable managerial implication can be achieved. The application of the framework gives organizations the chance to evaluate its usability and to encounter potential drawbacks that consequently demonstrate an opportunity to make modification and to identify potential missing antecedents of trust for future research.

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