Strongest Drivers of Trust in Automotive Supply Chains

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Abstract— The issue addressed in this paper concerns the erosion of trust within supply chains, as reported by key industry stakeholders. In this context, automotive component buyers frequently rely on single-source suppliers, thereby intensifying competitive pressures on component manufacturers. Consequently, automotive component suppliers must seek to strengthen supplier relationships to enhance trust. Given the limited opportunities for differentiation, automotive component suppliers increasingly pursue alternative strategies to ensure their long-term sustainability, with a particular emphasis on value-driven supplier relationships founded on trust. Existing literature suggests that optimised supplier relationships contribute to trust-building. This study employs a quantitative approach, utilising path analysis to identify the relationship value construct exhibiting the strongest correlation with trust. The findings indicate a significant correlation between product quality and delivery, suggesting that the timely and accurate delivery of products is the most critical factor in fostering trust between buyers and suppliers. Additionally, the analysis reveals that the most statistically significant aspect of relationship value is product quality and delivery. The paper concludes with theoretical and managerial recommendations, including the implementation of a relational governance strategy within automotive supply chains to strengthen trust and enhance long-term sustainability.

Index Terms — supply chain relationships, buyer-seller relationships, South African automotive industry, relationship governance.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business environment, companies must strategically design and efficiently manage their supply chains to maintain a competitive edge. This is because modern supply chain dynamics extend beyond individual corporate competition, positioning supply chains themselves as the primary drivers of competitiveness (Kim & Lee, 2024). Suppliers can no longer achieve differentiation solely based on price or quality, as these factors are now standardized requirements within competitive markets. Consequently, they must seek alternative avenues for distinction, particularly through the cultivation and enhancement of strategic supplier relationships (Tolmay, 2019; Pham et al., 2024). This shift highlights the importance of collaboration and integration within supply networks, where synergistic relationships between businesses enable sustainability and market resilience (Kim & Lee, 2024).

Over the past decade, supply chain relationships have been constantly changing and shifting towards a single-sourcing approach (Feiweier, 2023). As a result, this strategy involves building closer, long-term relationships with fewer suppliers, making the selection of suitable partners increasingly crucial (Fan et al., 2025). For suppliers, becoming a preferred partner requires strategic positioning to meet buyer needs effectively and therefore achieve sustainability, as Zouari (2025) highlights the pivotal role of strong supply chain relationships in fostering sustainability. Effective collaboration among supply chain partners enhances resource efficiency, mitigates environmental impact, and supports long-term economic resilience. As a result, relationships that enhance trust seem to be at the core of supplier relationships. Therefore, O'Malley (2003), Fernie (2023), and Schilke (2025) assert that trust serves as "the glue that holds a relationship together," a principle that is equally applicable to supply chains. Thus, trust is recognized as a fundamental component of supplier relationships, fostering collaboration, reliability, and long-term sustainability. Trust and cooperation among stakeholders strengthen supply chain dynamics, facilitating the implementation of sustainable practices and driving continuous improvement. By prioritizing robust partnerships, organizations can advance sustainability initiatives while ensuring long-term business success and competitiveness in an evolving global market (Zouari, 2025).

The automotive industry is a key contributor to the South African economy, serving as a vital driver of economic growth, employment, and industrial development. To ensure its long-term sustainability, continuous efforts must be made to strengthen the industry's supply chains, enhance competitiveness, and support innovation (AIEC, 2025). Efforts should be directed towards sustaining the South African automotive supply chains (AIEC, 2025). Unfortunately, trust can be significantly undermined by opportunistic behaviours between buyers and sellers, a challenge frequently observed in South African automotive supply chains (Tolmay, 2019). Global market pressures, coupled with opportunistic supplier behaviour—such as delays in delivery, substandard service, quality deficiencies, and a lack of commitment—frequently result in strained buyer-supplier relationships (Cheng & Lewis, 2024). These deteriorating interactions erode buyer confidence in suppliers, thereby compromising trust and stability within the supply chain (Pham et al., 2024). Consequently, weakened trust poses significant challenges to the sustainability and effectiveness of supply chain partnerships, ultimately impacting operational efficiency and long-term collaboration (Fan et al., 2025). Addressing these concerns through strategic supplier management and trust-building mechanisms is essential for fostering resilient and mutually beneficial supply chain relationships.

The problem addressed in this paper is that the opportunistic behaviour of suppliers hampers trust within supply chains (Tolmay, 2019; Pham et al., 2024). This risk might negatively impact the sustainability of automotive supply chains. However, in the absence of trust, suppliers might stand a chance of losing the contract with the buyer, and sustainability might be sacrificed (Tolmay, 2019). Therefore, the benefit of trust in the buyer-supplier relationship should not be underestimated (Vieira et al., 2013). This paper's primary objective is to test the correlation between supplier relationships and trust. If the correlation proves to be true, the secondary objective is to identify the items of the relationship construct with the strongest significance.

While extensive research has established that strong supply chain relationships positively influence the performance of collaborating partners, scholarly discourse often lacks clarity on the specific relationship attributes that drive these outcomes. Notably, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the aspects of supply chain relationships that foster trust and long-term commitment (Qian et al., 2023; Gu et al., 2025). The research presented in this paper aims to address this gap by exploring supplier relationships, with a particular focus on the role of trust in cultivating and sustaining these partnerships.

II. Supply chain relationships

The South African automotive industry plays a critical role in the national economy (AIEC, 2024). As the largest contributor to the manufacturing sector, it accounted for 21.9% of the total value addition within the domestic manufacturing industry in 2023. Furthermore, the broader automotive industry contributed 5.3% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with 3.2% derived from manufacturing activities and 2.1% from the retail sector (AIEC, 2024). Given its economic significance, ensuring the long-term sustainability of automotive supply chains is essential for maintaining industry stability, fostering economic growth, and securing the future viability of automotive manufacturers and suppliers.

Continuous improvement philosophies, such as total quality management (TQM) and lean principles, promote buyer-supplier relationships in supply chains (including automotive supply chains), which promise to achieve a competitive advantage (Slack et al., 2017). This is because continuous improvement in supply chains not only encapsulates the improvement of the actual product through the offering of the required quality, speed, dependability, and flexibility, but also, very importantly, the improvement of supplier relationships (Slack et al., 2017). Thus, contemporary supply chain theory emphasizes close relationships between supply chain role players (Cheng & Chen, 2016). Positive supplier relationships add value for both parties and result in numerous benefits, including profitability and sustainability (Herko & Hanna, 2017).

Unfortunately, the pressures of globalization have strained supply chain relationships, negatively impacting long-term sustainability (Ghadge et al., 2017; Cheng & Chen, 2016). A lack of trust increases risks for both buyers and suppliers. Cheng and Chen (2016) advocate for fostering positive supplier relationships, while Yeh (2016) recommends a "relationship governance" strategy for continuous evaluation.

Strategic alliances in buyer-seller relationships foster long-term cooperation, enabling joint planning, shared knowledge, and improved solutions (Wisner et al., 2016). These partnerships encourage mutual respect, loyalty, and potential vertical integration, ensuring sustained collaboration through active relationship management (Bowersox et al., 2012; Swink et al., 2011). This is supported by the literature, which states that supply chain buyer-supplier relationships with elevated value result in trust (Tolmay & Venter, 2017). If both the buyer and supplier are willing to engage in mutual trust, the continuation of the buyer-seller relationship is secured (Chen & Lin, 2011).

According to Ulaga and Eggert (2006), Eggert, Ulaga, and Schultz (2006), and later Gounaris and Almoraish (2024), a valued supplier relationship comprises three key constructs. Firstly, the core offering includes delivery performance and product quality, which are essential in the automotive supply chain for producing components that meet specifications and ensuring timely logistics. Secondly, the sourcing process involves service support through direct personal interaction between suppliers and buyers. Lastly, customer operations encompass the supplier's expertise and their ability to enhance the buyer's time-to-market performance. These constructs are widely supported in literature as critical drivers of strong buyer-supplier relationships (Coenen et al., 2012).

Strategic buyer-supplier relationships foster trust, which is fundamental to value creation and long-term sustainability (Wisner et al., 2016). Herko and Hanna (2017) emphasize that trust strengthens collaboration, enhancing supply chain resilience. Gounaris (2005) asserts that greater trust in a supplier increases the perceived value of the relationship. Effective buyer-supplier partnerships rely on mutual trust, as "no real collaboration can exist in supply chain relationships without meaningful trust" (Bowersox et al., 2012). Moreover, trust significantly enhances the overall value of buyer-seller interactions, reinforcing cooperation and stability in supply chains (Saban & Luchs, 2011; Mandal, 2015).

A. Trust in Supply Chain Relationships

The Oxford Dictionary defines trust as the "firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something". More focused on the business environment, Morgan and Hunt (1994: 23) define trust as the *"…belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive out-comes for the firm as well as not take unexpected actions that result in negative outcomes"*. Morgan and Hunt (1994) state that trust is central to relational exchanges and results in commitment, fostering a longer-term focus on relational exchanges. Trust within automotive supply chains specifically, according to Tolmay (2018: 87), is visualised as an assurance of integrity and reliability between the supply chain buyer and seller over the long term. Therefore, in the absence of trust, the suspension of the contract may result (Tolmay, 2018: 81), and thus, trust should be treated as a crucial ingredient in buyer-seller relationships (Vieira, et al., 2013: 266).

In the presence of trust, a party is perceived as reliable and possessing a high degree of integrity, which is associated with fairness, commitment, honesty, competence, responsibility, helpfulness, and benevolence (Morgan & Hunt, 1994: Hanaysha, 2022). Hofstede et al. (2006) state that trust within supply chains comprises enforceable trust and intrinsic trust. Enforceable trust refers to trust established through good performance, whereas intrinsic trust relates to consensual vulnerability. This vulnerability reflects the constant and fundamental human need to associate with other people who are perceived as trustworthy. In light of the above, enforceable trust is most applicable to automotive supply chains when the buyer (or trustor) expands or terminates contracts based on the performance of the supplier. Therefore, the performance of the trustee (supplier) is rewarded or punished by the trustor (customer/buyer) (Hofstede et al., 2006).

Trust is not limited to transactional reliability but also encompasses critical elements such as competence, integrity, and relational trust between supply chain partners. Understanding these dimensions is vital for enhancing buyer-supplier relationships, mitigating opportunistic behaviour, and promoting sustainable supply chain practices.

The presence of trust in supplier relationships fosters commitment, which in turn contributes to long-term sustainability (Hanaysha, 2022). Consequently, organisations should actively cultivate and strengthen supplier

relationships with a strategic focus on enhancing trust, as it serves as a fundamental pillar for achieving stability and resilience within supply chains.

Fernie (2023) argues that trust is the foundation of supplier relationships and underscores the need for more extensive research to conceptualise and operationalise trust within supply chain dynamics. A clearer understanding of trust's role will facilitate the development of strategies that reinforce long-term collaboration, ensuring stability and competitiveness in an increasingly complex global supply network. A deeper examination is necessary to understand how trust can be strategically cultivated and managed to enhance supply chain resilience and optimise operational efficiency. By identifying key trust-building mechanisms, organisations can develop robust supplier relationships, mitigate risks, and enhance overall supply chain sustainability and performance.

As further research on the conceptualisation of trust within supply chains is encouraged, this paper aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the conceptualisation of trust.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The buyer-supplier relationship and its inherent value have been extensively examined in the literature from both the buyer's (customer's) and seller's (supplier's) perspectives (Tolmay, 2019). However, this study focuses exclusively on the buyer's perspective. Employing a survey-based research strategy, the study targeted automotive supply chain buyers as the unit of analysis to assess their perceptions of supplier behaviours that serve as antecedents to trust. By capturing insights from buyers, the research aims to identify key supplier actions that contribute to building and maintaining trust within the automotive supply chain.

The study utilized the questionnaire from the seminal work of Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Hanaysha (2022) on trust (refer to Table 1), as well as Ulaga and Eggert (2006) and Gounaris and Almoraish (2024) on supplier relationships (see Table 2). The trust construct (Table 1) includes three items. The supplier relationship items include the three value drivers for relationships, namely core offering, sourcing process, and customer operations, as a basis. A total of 16 items were used (refer to Table 2).

The measurement instrument employed a seven-point semantic differential measurement scale. As part of the questionnaire validation process, a survey was conducted among four organizations in the automotive industry to determine whether the questions were applicable within the South African automotive supply chains. Following the validation process, the final questionnaire was administered as part of a quantitative survey. Respondents received an email containing a link to access the questionnaire, and non-respondents were subsequently contacted via telephone to encourage participation.

The survey targeted Tier 1 suppliers within the South African automotive supply chain, specifically members of the National Association of Allied and Automotive Component Manufacturers (NAACAM). It was directed at senior supply chain professionals, including technical managers, procurement managers, and chief executive officers. Respondents were required to assess their perceptions of their top-performing supplier ("Supplier A") based on key relationship attributes such as trust, product delivery and quality, personal interaction, and product development.

A total of 119 respondents (out of 146) successfully completed the questionnaire, yielding an overall response rate of 81.4%. Upon receiving the data, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, followed by a path analysis to identify key relationships and validate the proposed research model.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The dependent variable, trust, was assessed using a three-item scale adapted from the foundational research of Morgan and Hunt (1994) and later refined by Hanaysha (2022). The reliability of this trust scale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.917 (Table 1). This value exceeds the widely

accepted threshold of 0.70 for internal consistency, as recommended by Pallant (2016), indicating a high level of reliability in the measurement instrument.

Table 1: Construct Scales for Trust

Dependent Variable	Questions	Factor loadings	Mean of individual items	Factor Mean	Std. Dev. for Factor	Cronbach's Alpha for construct
Trust	In our relationship, my firm feels that Supplier A can be counted on to do what is right.	0.906	5.786	5.866	0.929	0.917
	In our relationship with Supplier A, our firm feels that Supplier A can be trusted.	0.938	5.939			
	In our relationship, Supplier A demonstrates a high level of integrity.	0.935	5.800			

To evaluate the measurement model for the independent variables, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying constructs within the dataset. An orthogonal rotation method, specifically varimax rotation, was employed to enhance factor separation (Pallant, 2016). Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was selected as the extraction method, and the analysis was performed using SPSS 24.0.

A preliminary assessment confirmed that the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity were not violated. The correlation matrix (Table 3) demonstrated strong inter-item correlations (> 0.5), providing justification for factor analysis (Pallant, 2016). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.898, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974). Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) confirmed that the correlation matrix was suitable for factor analysis.

The analysis resulted in four factors, accounting for 72% of the variance, with strong loadings for each (Table 3). The factors were identified as: product delivery and quality (F1), personal interaction (F2), product development support (F3), and improving time-to-market (F4).

F1: Product Delivery and Quality reflects the suppliers' performance in reliability, product quality, and delivery (mean = 5.791, SD = 0.988). This was the highest-rated factor.

F2: Personal Interaction represents the relationship quality between supplier and buyer, including information sharing and customer treatment (mean = 5.697, SD = 0.968).

F3: Product Development Support indicates the supplier's assistance in product development (mean = 5.285, SD = 1.269).

F4: Improving Time-to-Market reflects the supplier's role in accelerating product launches (mean = 5.044, SD = 1.270).

Respondents showed lower agreement on the last two factors (F3 and F4), with standard deviations indicating consistent variance across all factors.

Table 2: Factors (F1, F2, F3, F4)

Constructs and questions	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha for construct	Mean of individual items	Std. Dev. for individual items	Factor Mean	Std. Dev. for Factor
F1–Product delivery and quality						
Supplier A has the ability to secure product quality consistency.	.780		5.798	1.122		
Supplier A provides acceptable delivery accuracy (no missing or wrong parts).	.780		5.737	1.153		
Supplier A offers product reliability.	.753		5.904	.892		
Supplier A makes minimal delivery errors (late, wrong address, wrong products).	.737		5.561	1.255		
Supplier A has the ability to meet delivery dates.	.654		5.849	1.030		
Supplier A has minimal product rejects (faulty).	.607		5.868	1.035		
Supplier A has the ability to address problems.	.590	0.930	5.832	1.017	5.791	.98834
F2–Personal Interaction						
Supplier A has the ability to provide us with appropriate information.	.745		5.842	1.001		
Supplier A has the ability to give us a feeling of being treated as an important client.	.740		5.728	1.131		
Supplier A offers good working relationships.	.703		5.779	1.041		
Supplier A has the ability to provide general know-how.	.588	0.904	5.434	1.217	5.6974	.96823
F3–Product development support						
Supplier A has the ability to assist with new product development.	.871		5.446	1.446		
Supplier A has the ability to help us speed up product development.	.715		5.257	1.357		
Supplier A has the ability to drive innovation in products.	.606	0.888	5.173	1.433	5.2857	1.26859
F4–Improving time-to-market						
Supplier A has the ability to help us to improve the cycle time of all activities in the manufacturing process.	.758		4.982	1.395		
Supplier A has the ability to improve our time-to-market.	.722	0.803	5.088	1.373	5.0442	.27047

The mean for each individual item was first calculated, after which the mean of the item means within each construct was computed to determine the factor mean. These mean scores functioned as proxy measures for the factors and were utilised as observed variables in the path analysis. Subsequently, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to examine the relationships between the factors, with the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation

		Trust	F1_Product quality and delivery	F2_Personal Interaction	F3_Product development support	F4_Improving time-to-market
Pearson's correlation	Trust	1.000				
	F1–Product quality and delivery	.819*	1.000			
	F2– Personal interaction	.792*	.710*	1.000		
	F3–Product development support	.553*	.629*	.649*	1.000	
	F4–Improve time-to-market	.548*	.537*	.580*	.557*	1.000

* All correlations were significant at a 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All correlations exceeded 0.5, indicating strong relationships (Pallant, 2016). While these results demonstrate the strength of the bivariate associations, the primary objective of this study was to determine the variables that explain the variation in trust from a multivariate perspective.

To address this, a path analysis was conducted to assess the predictive strength of the four independent factors in explaining trust, the dependent variable. The standardised regression coefficients (β coefficients) obtained from the path analysis are presented in Figure 1, with the key findings as follows:

The first factor, product quality and delivery (F1), and the second factor, personal interaction (F2), exhibit the strongest direct effects on trust, with $\beta = 0.56$ for F1 and $\beta = 0.44$ for F2 ($p < 0.01$).

Conversely, the third factor, product development support (F3), and the fourth factor, improving time-to-market (F4), do not exert a significant direct influence on trust, with $\beta = -0.01$ for F3 and $\beta = 0.06$ for F4 ($p < 0.01$).

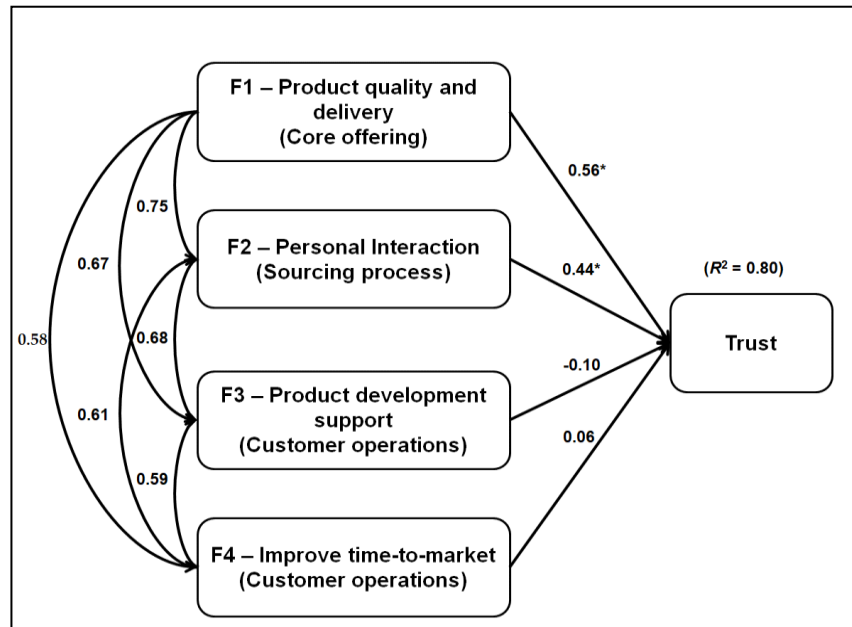The model explains 80% of the variance in trust, as indicated by the R-squared value (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Results of the path analysis. Standardised coefficients are presented

*(*Significance p <0.01)*

The correlations between the independent variables in the path analysis (F1, F2, F3, F4) (Figure 1) demonstrated acceptable discriminant validity, as all correlation coefficients remained below 0.90 (Pallant, 2016). This indicates that the factors are sufficiently independent, ensuring distinctiveness among the variables.

Following the path analysis, the secondary objective was to identify the items within the relationship construct that exhibited the strongest statistical significance.

Table 4: Items of Product Delivery and Quality

F1–Product delivery and quality	Mean of individual items
a. Supplier A makes minimal delivery errors (late, wrong address, wrong products).	5.904
b. Supplier A has minimal product rejects (faulty).	5.868
c. Supplier A has the ability to meet delivery dates.	5.849
d. Supplier A has the ability to address problems.	5.832
e. Supplier A has the ability to secure product quality consistency.	5.798
f. Supplier A provides acceptable delivery accuracy (no missing or wrong parts).	5.737
g. Supplier A offers product reliability.	5.561

Under the product quality and delivery construct (F1), the item with the highest level of agreement among respondents was: Supplier A makes minimal delivery errors (late, incorrect address, incorrect products) (item a) with a mean score of 5.904. This was followed by Supplier A has minimal product rejects (faulty products) (item b) with a mean of 5.868. The third most agreed-upon item was Supplier A has the ability to meet delivery dates (item c) with a mean of 5.849, followed by Supplier A has the ability to address problems (item d) with a mean of 5.832. The fifth-ranked item was Supplier A ensures product quality consistency (item e) with a mean of 5.798, followed by Supplier A provides acceptable delivery accuracy (no missing or incorrect parts)

(item f) with a mean of 5.737. The lowest-ranked item was Supplier A offers product reliability (item g), which had a mean of 5.561.

These findings suggest that buyers prioritise receiving defect-free products with no delivery errors (items a and b, Table 4). Additionally, timely deliveries to the correct address are considered crucial (items c and d, Table 4). Consistency in product quality, with no variations or missing components, is also a key expectation (items e and f, Table 4). Finally, ensuring reliable product performance remains an essential requirement for suppliers (item g, Table 4).

V. DISCUSSION

The sustainability of automotive supply chains is of utmost importance for the South African automotive industry. Literature posits that higher levels of trust in supply chains enhance commitment and sustainability. Therefore, all efforts should be applied to enhance supplier relationships and foster trust. Unfortunately, the problem addressed in this paper is that the opportunistic behaviour of suppliers is hampering trust within supply chains.

The primary objective addressed in this paper was to test the correlation between supplier relationship constructs and trust. If the correlations prove to be true, the secondary objective was to identify the items of the relationship construct with the strongest significance.

Four relational drivers of trust were examined: product quality and delivery (F1), personal interaction (F2), product development support (F3), and improving time-to-market (F4). The analysis demonstrated that product quality and delivery (F1) exhibited the strongest correlation with trust ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$), followed by personal interaction (F2) ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$), both of which are integral to the sourcing process (Figure 1). The significant correlation of product quality and delivery (F1) suggests that the timely and accurate delivery of products is the most critical factor in fostering trust between buyers and suppliers.

With these correlations proven true, the secondary objective was to identify the items of the relationship construct with the strongest significance. The findings indicate that the most statistically significant factor is product quality and delivery (F1), and the most significant item of F1 is the minimization of delivery errors, including delays, incorrect addresses, and incorrect products. Ensuring accuracy in delivery processes is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and fostering trust in business relationships, highlighting its critical role in supply chain and customer satisfaction management.

This finding, which identifies the core offering—product quality and delivery—as a key determinant, differs from the conclusions of Gounaris and Almoraish (2024). However, their study focused on customer experience in relation to trust, representing a slightly different research perspective and emphasis.

This finding provides evidence that relationships within the supply chain can cultivate trust, which, in turn, enhances commitment and sustainability. Therefore, it is essential for automotive component suppliers to develop strategic approaches aimed at strengthening relationships to foster trust and ensure long-term stability within the supply chain.

Moreover, it is essential for suppliers to uphold high standards of product quality and ensure timely delivery to cultivate strong supplier relationships. These factors are critical in fostering trust, which serves as a foundational element for long-term sustainability and the overall stability of supply chain partnerships.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper makes significant theoretical and managerial contributions. The theoretical contribution offers a more refined conceptualization of trust, particularly within automotive supply chains. From a managerial perspective, the findings encourage managers to prioritize product quality and delivery alongside personal interaction to enhance trust and, consequently, add value within supply chains.

In alignment with the theoretical framework proposed by Yeh (2016: 138), automotive component suppliers may consider implementing a relationship governance strategy, wherein trust is cultivated specifically through product quality and delivery (the core offering) and personal interaction (the sourcing process). A relationship governance strategy focuses on generating value through relational exchange with

clients or buyers. It is imperative that managers establish clear strategic objectives for this approach, specifically outlining how value can be added through product quality, delivery, and personal interaction. Governance strategies have emerged as crucial mechanisms for reinforcing resilience and sustainability within supply chains (Zhang & Sarker, 2024). When effectively implemented, such strategies can actively enhance relationship value and strengthen trust within supply chain networks. Conversely, failing to foster trust through supplier relationships may lead to heightened risks, including financial repercussions that could undermine supplier sustainability. As part of a relational governance strategy, a trust-centric approach is recommended, whereby both parties engage in collaborative knowledge-sharing and innovation while demonstrating a mutual willingness to invest in the relationship through expertise, commitment, and problem-solving initiatives.

This study invites further research, particularly concerning supply chains across different industries and geographical contexts. Future research should explore the broader conceptualization of supplier relationships, trust, and other relational sustainability enablers. Additionally, the present study examines only the buyer's perception of the supplier, excluding the supplier's perception of the buyer. Investigating two-way perceptions may yield valuable insights, including potential perception asymmetries, which could generate further meaningful findings.

In conclusion, as competition within the automotive supply chain intensifies, automotive component suppliers are advised to strengthen trust through a relational governance strategy to maintain their position and competitiveness in the industry.

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Najmočnejši dejavniki zaupanja v avtomobilskih oskrbovalnih verigah

Povzetek - Ta članek obravnava vprašanje izgube zaupanja v oskrbovalnih verigah, kot so poročali ključni deležniki v industriji. V tem kontekstu se kupci avtomobilskih komponent pogosto zanašajo na enega samega dobavitelja, s čimer se povečuje konkurenčni pritisk na proizvajalce komponent. Zato morajo dobavitelji avtomobilskih komponent poskušati okrepiti zaupanje. Glede na omejene možnosti za diferenciacijo, dobavitelji avtomobilskih komponent iščejo alternativne strategije za zagotavljanje svoje dolgoročne trajnosti, s posebnim poudarkom na vrednostno usmerjenih odnosih, ki temeljijo na zaupanju. Obstoječa literatura izpostavlja, da optimizirani odnosi z dobavitelji prispevajo k gradnji zaupanja. Ta študija uporablja kvantitativni pristop in s pomočjo analize poti ugotavlja konstrukt vrednosti odnosa, ki kaže najmočnejšo korelacijo z zaupanjem. Ugotovitve prikazujejo pomembno korelacijo med kakovostjo izdelka in dostavo, kar nakazuje, da je pravočasna in natančna dostava izdelkov najpomembnejši dejavnik pri vzpostavljanju zaupanja med kupci in dobavitelji. Poleg tega analiza kaže, da sta kakovost izdelkov in dostava statistično najpomembnejša vidika vrednosti odnosa. Članek se zaključi s teoretičnimi in upravljavskimi priporočili, vključno z izvajanjem strategije upravljanja odnosov v avtomobilskih oskrbovalnih verigah, za krepitev zaupanja in izboljšanje dolgoročne trajnosti.

Ključne besede - zaupanje, odnosi v oskrbovalni verigi, odnosi med kupci in prodajalci, južnoafriška avtomobilska industrija, upravljanje odnosov.