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Critical Factors Affecting Trust in Construction Partnering in UK

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Abstract
Critical Factors Affecting Construction Partnering has been advocated for use in the construction industry as a new procurement approach that tries to create an effective project management process between two or more organisations with the aim of providing a sound basis for a win-win climate. Among the success factors of partnering, trust and mutual understanding have been identified as the most important components. However establishing trust among partners in construction is very daunting especially when they are operating under a bid-price driven environment which promotes suspicious behaviours. A questionnaire survey was conducted on client organisations, consultancy firms and contractors in the UK to assess the role of trust in partnering. Results from the study indicated that the relationship between trust and partnering is not always linear suggesting that apart from 'trust' other elements are required to achieve success in partnering. Moreover, 14 trust attributes identified in literature were considered to be of relevance to partnering success. 'Openness and integrity of communication' was seen to be the most critical trust factor. The other relatively more critical factors which include competence, effective communication and sufficient information flow are all action related attributes required in the day-to-day running of projects.
Keywords: Partnering, Trust, Success, Attributes

1. Introduction

Problems such as lack of cooperation, limited trust and ineffective communications characterise the construction industry resulting in an adversarial relationship among project stakeholders. Project delays, difficulty in resolving claims, cost overruns, arbitration and litigation are a reflection of this kind of relationship (Moore, et al., 1992). Partnering has emerged as a new procurement approach that tries to create an effective project management process between two or more organizations. It aims to generate an organizational environment of trust, open communication, and employee involvement thus providing a sound basis for a 'win-win' climate (Chan, et al., 2004; Eriksson, 2010).

Over the years, partnering has evolved as an innovative approach to procurement of construction services and this has been paralleled with a great deal of research. Identified benefits include lowering the risk of cost overruns and delays as a result of better time and cost control over the project (Black, et al., 2000). Partnering also increases the opportunity for teamwork and innovation, especially in the development of value management because of open communications and existence of trust among project parties (Chan, et al., 2004). Other benefits identified in partnering literature are reduced litigation, better product quality, efficient problem solving, closer relationship, enhanced communication, continuous improvement, lower administrative cost, better safety performance, increased satisfaction and improved culture (Chan, et al., 2003).

Several problems and barriers hinder the successful implementation of partnering despite its potential benefits. Researchers such as Ng et al (2002) and Chan et al (2003) have looked into these. Common problems identified include misunderstanding of the partnering concept, cultural barriers, uneven commitment, communication problems, lack of continuous improvement, inefficient problem solving mechanisms, insufficient efforts and discreditable relationships (Chan, et al., 2003; Ng, et al., 2002; Tang, et al., 2006; Eriksson, 2010).

The difficulties associated in application of partnering in practice have driven researchers into the identification of its critical success factors which include the establishment and communication of a conflict resolution strategy, a willingness to share resources among project participants and a clear definition of responsibilities. Other critical success factors of partnering are the establishment of mutual trust toward partners, efficient coordination, commitment and support from top management, long-term commitment and effective communication (Lazar, 2000; Cheng, et al., 2000; Bayramoglu, 2001; Chan, et al., 2004).

Among the success factors of partnering, trust and mutual understanding have been identified as the most important components. Wong et al. (2005) have clearly argued that the general factors such as top management support and adequate resources are required in all types of construction projects thus studying them do not add to our knowledge about partnering. Trust, on the other hand, is very vital for cooperative relationships such as partnering (Wong, et al., 2005).

Trust itself is a complex phenomenon which cuts across the wider social sciences. Establishing it among partners in construction is very daunting especially when they operate under a 'bid-price-driven'

environment which encourages suspicious and mistrustful attitudes (Kadefors, 2004; Wong, et al., 2005). A better understanding of the role of trust and critical factors affecting it in partnering is therefore of both academic and practical value and thus the focus of this study. It could form the basis of effective strategies for improving partnering performance in the construction industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The emergence of Partnering

The partnering concept emerged basically in the management of operations in the automotive industry and it has its roots in the theories of strategic alliances and supply chain management. It is also linked with the partnership philosophy which emerged with globalisation. Organisations have looked outside their internal environment for ways of responding to the ever changing market conditions. The main aim is to enhance collaborative advantage and to produce long-term mutual benefits for each partner. Risks, responsibilities, resources and rewards are shared with the goal of increasing the potential for collaboration beyond other working methods (Barlow, et al., 1997; Jones & Saad, 2003).

The success of partnering in the automotive industry influenced other industries including construction. Since the mid-1980s it has been applied to engineering and construction projects in other places such as the USA, Japan and Australia. It was first applied in the UK construction in the offshore oil and gas sectors. During the late 1980s and 1990s, more leading clients in the industry began to take a fundamentally different approach to procurement by developing longer term and more collaborative relationships with some consultants and contractors. This was in an attempt to address the adversarial relationships in which claims and counter-claims regularly continue long after projects have been completed (Bennell & Baird, 2001; Jones & Saad, 2003).

Sir Michael Latham's report, 'Constructing the Team,' which was published in 1994, gave considerable additional impetus to partnering. He advocated that greater collaboration between clients and suppliers was beneficial. In 1998, the report by Sir John Egan's Construction Task Force, 'Rethinking Construction,' also identified 'partnering in the supply chain' among its four priorities for change. Less confrontational contracts such as the Engineering and Construction and PPC 2000 have since been introduced with the aim of avoiding disputes, delays and extra costs. Thus the drive behind the emergence of partnering in construction has been the desire to avoid the problems caused by conflicts between the various parties in the construction process (Barlow, et al., 1997; Jones & Saad, 2003).

2.2 Trust

There isn't one universally accepted scholarly definition of trust. According to Rousseau et al. (1998), 'trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another.' Similarly, Mayer et al. (1995) defines it 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.' It is also seen as 'the degree to which the trustor holds a positive attitude toward the trustee's goodwill and reliability in a risky exchange situation' (Das & Teng, 1998). 'Confident expectations' and 'willingness to be vulnerable' have thus been noted to be critical components of definitions of trust (Rousseau, et al., 1998; Mayer, et al., 1995; Das & Teng, 1998; Thorgren & Wincent, 2011).

Interdependence is a condition essential to trust. For trust to be necessary, there should be a recognition that people must depend on others in various ways in order to achieve their goals (Jin & Ling, 2005). The form of trust between parties is directly affected by the level of interdependence. For example, the nature of trust that is created between a firm and its permanent employee would differ from that between the same firm and its temporary workers (Rousseau, et al., 1998). Hence it is vital to consider the trust in relation to the level of interdependence.

Risk is another prerequisite of trust. It is the perceived probability of loss when parties initiate interaction and develop their relationships (Chiles & McMackin, 1996). Consequently, trust is encouraged to counterbalance these risks. If there were complete certainty and the absence of risks in a relationship, trust would be unnecessary (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Jin & Ling, 2005). More trust would need to be fostered when more risks exist. Maximum amount of risks usually appear in a later stage of relationship because risks are cumulative (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). It has been argued that a sustained commitment to trust is always necessary since the maximum amount of trust is required at the later stages of relationships. It has been noted, however, that the process of accumulation of risks and trust may not always be linear (Jin & Ling, 2005).

2.3 Characteristics of Trust

Trust is a dynamic phenomenon since it could develop, decline, be built or resurface in long standing relationships within organisations. Three identified phases of trust are the building, stability and dissolution phases (Rousseau, et al., 1998). The building phase refers to a situation where trust is created or enhanced and could be manifested in the emergence of trust in new organisations and organisational relationships or even in existing organisational relationships. The stability phase relates to the maintenance of trust in relations where it

already exists. The dissolution phase could be evident within organisations in a situation where there is betrayal or downsizing (Mishra, 1996; Rousseau, et al., 1998).

Most researchers conceptualize trust as an independent variable especially when the focus is on economic outcomes. It is often modelled as a potential cause in choice scenarios as in the classical Prisoner's Dilemma experiments. In these experiments, high trust probably based on previous experiences with a partner in a repeated game was observed to result in a decision to cooperate thus leading to economic gains (Axelrod, 1984). In like manner, trust has been viewed by economists as a cause of reduced opportunism among transacting parties. It has also been found to have a direct bearing on the success of organisational negotiations and conflict or dispute resolution (Rousseau, et al., 1998). In all these situations, trust is seen as a cause.

Nonetheless, trust is also sometimes modelled as a result or an interacting variable by scholars. In the case of Japanese firms trust has historically been seen as the result of deep dependence and identity formation (Ouchi, 1981). It can also be seen as the result of such attributes as competence, concern, openness and reliability of the other party (Mishra, 1996). Trust has been seen as a result of institutional arrangements. Third-party relations have also been found to have an effect on trust where one's reputation is based on the ability of a third party to tell stories about his trustworthiness. Still, trust has also been modelled as a moderating variable by some researchers, for example, by examining its moderating effects on the reactions of downsizing (Rousseau, et al., 1998).

Trust is also multilevel in nature and could be analysed as interpersonal, inter-organisational or intra-organisational. However, analysis at the individual level tends to characterise conceptualizations of trust at the intra-organisational or inter-organisational levels. Within firms, examples of analysis at the individual level are trust among co-workers and willingness of subordinates to trust their bosses and vice versa (Rousseau, et al., 1998). Zaheer and McEvily (1998) define inter-organisational trust as 'the extent of trust placed in the partner organisation by the members of a focal organisation' (Zaheer & McEvily, 1998). Even here, interpersonal trust may still come to play as trust may be placed by an individual boundary spanner in her individual opposite member (Suha & Kwonb, 2006). It will thus be difficult to eliminate individuals in the analysis of trust at any level.

2.4 Factors Critical to Trust in Construction Partnering

A study to identify factors critical to the development of trust in construction partnering in Hong Kong has was conducted by Wong and Cheng (2004). 14 attributes were identified and grouped under four factors namely performance, permeability, relational bonding, and system-based trust in their study. They established that trust in construction projects was not only based on 'Competence, Integrity and Benevolence' (Intuitive) perspectives as proposed in the models of Mayer et al. (1995) and Hartman (2003), but also 'system-based trust. They also suggested that the higher level of importance placed on system-based trust in construction partnering in Hong Kong was because persistent and continual contractual relationship between two parties is rare, hence a greater reliance on the formalized system of laws and contracts (Wong & Cheung, 2004; Mayer, et al., 1995; Hartman, 2003; Thorgren & Wincent, 2011).

Moreover, their results also indicate that the role of the benevolence or intuitive perspective on trust building was of less significance when compared to other studies. They suggested that this may be due to the reality that most partnering projects in Hong Kong have been on residential and commercial developments and repetition of cooperation between developers and contractors in these types of projects is very limited (Wong & Cheung, 2004; Wong, et al., 2005)

It is worth noting that many researchers have highlighted the importance of factors such as geographical and cultural differences in the development of trust (Mayer, et al., 1995; Marshall, 2003; Hartman, 2003). The results of the study of Wong and Cheng (2004) and others elsewhere could not be wholly applied to the construction industry in UK. It is for this reason that this research aims to investigate the attributes of trust that are critical to the construction industry in UK.

3. Research Methodology

The data collection method employed for this study was a questionnaire survey. Measurement is the function of this instrument of research. The goal of a questionnaire survey is to draw accurate information from respondents by providing a standard format on which attitudes, facts and comments can be documented. This standard format enables the data to be analysed easily.

The questionnaire was distributed to client bodies, consultants and contractors who are involved or have been involved on partnering projects. This was to ensure that the views of all stakeholders in the industry were captured. The names and electronic addresses of the respondents were researched from the web pages.

The housing association and the contractors who work with them were particularly targeted for this survey. This was because these organisations undertake developments on a regular basis and are therefore in a better position to work repeatedly with contractors. More partnering arrangements are formed in this sector of the industry thus it is more likely that respondents would have partnering experience.

In view of the problem of low response rate associated with questionnaire surveys, mechanisms were adopted to encourage the respondent to reply. The questionnaires were distributed electronically not only to lower cost but also to reduce the effort involved in responding. Reminders were also sent to the respondents three weeks after the questions had been distributed.

The majority of the questions on the questionnaire were closed to make it easy to complete. Closed questions also facilitate the analysis process as answers provided are much easier to compare. The questionnaires were structured into three parts as outlined below. Part 1 captured Personal Information including working experience and partnering experience. Part 2 concentrated on Trust factors in partnering. 14 attributes of trust in partnering identified in the literature were investigated. Respondents were requested to rate the importance of the 14 attributes in the development of trust in partnering using a scale of 0-9 where 0 would mean irrelevant and 9 highly relevant. Part 3 covered the importance of trust in partnering. Respondents were asked to rate the success of their partnering projects and the level of trust in their partners. General comments concerning trust in partnering were also welcomed.

4. Survey Results and Analysis

A total of 252 questionnaires were sent to client organisations, consultancy firms and contractors to assess the role of trust in partnering. There were 44 replies received, representing a 17.5% response rate. The general response rate for questionnaire survey in the construction industry is known be about 10%. With the incentives and other mechanisms employed, the expected rate is 15%. The 17.5% return rate was thus considered to be reasonably good.

All responses were valid for analysis since all respondents indicated that they had experience in partnering. Questionnaires were received from all the stakeholder groups in the construction industry. In terms of respondents' roles in the partnering, 10 out of the 44 respondents representing 23% were clients. 14 of the questionnaires received representing 32 % were from contractors. The remaining 20 making up 45% of the respondents were consultants. The roles of respondents in partnering are illustrated below.

Table 1. Roles of Respondents

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Clients	10	23
Contractors	14	32
Consultants	20	45
Total	**44**	**100**

The respondents of this survey had varied working experience. It could be seen from Table 2 that only 9% of the respondents had less than 5 years working experience, 11 % of the respondents had between 5 to 10 years working experience, 16% between 11 to 15 years, 18% between 16 to 20 years and 46% over 20 years.

Participants in this survey had experience in the different categories of partnering. 50% of the respondents had experience in project partnering and the other 50% in strategic partnering. All respondents who had experience in strategic partnering indicated that they also had experience in project partnering.

Partnering Success and Level of Trust was investigated to determine the relationship between the level of trust and partnering success. Table 2 shows the weighted ratings of ‘trust’ and ‘success’ by respondents.

Table 2. Partnering Success and Weighted Level of Trust

Rating of Partnering Success	Frequency	Mean Rating of Level of Trust
3	1	3
4	3	4
5	5	6
6	3	6.3
7	11	7.2
8	21	7.4
Total	44	

The levels of importance of the trust attributes were ranked using their mean score from the responses. The attribute with greater mean rating was assigned a higher ranking. As could be seen for Table 3 Openness was ranked highest with a mean score of 8.18. This was followed by Competence, Communication and Information flow respectively. Adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques (ranked 14th) was found to be relatively less important with a mean score of only 4.64.

Table 3. Overall Relative Importance of Trust Attributes

Trust Attributes	Mean Rating	Ranking
Openness	8.18	1
Competence	7.73	2
Communication	7.64	3
Information flow	7.41	4
Long-term relations	6.86	5
Financial	6.77	6
Respect	6.68	7
Satisfactory terms	6.64	8
Compatibility	6.57	9
Problem solving	6.45	10
Unity	6.45	10
Alignment	6.18	12
Reputation	5.86	13
Adoption of ADR	4.64	14

The result of the ratings of trust attributes were separated into three groups namely, clients, consultants and contractors. The aim was to investigate differences in the level of importance ascribed to the trust attributes by the various stakeholder groups. Openness, Competence and Information flow were regarded to be very critical by all stakeholder groups as could be noted from Table 4. Similarly, Adoption of ADR was rated to be of least importance by all groups.

Table 4. Relative Importance of Trust Factors: Stakeholders

Trust Attributes	Clients		Consultants		Contractors	
	Mean Rating	Ranking	Mean Rating	Ranking	Mean Rating	Ranking
Openness	8.6	1	7.6	1	8.71	1
Competence	8.4	2	7.1	2	8.14	2
Information flow	8.2	3	7.1	3	7.29	4
Financial	8.2	3	6.2	7	6.57	10
Problem solving	7.8	5	5.6	5	6.71	9
Unity	7.8	5	5.9	9	6.29	13
Reputation	7.6	7	4.7	13	6.33	12
Communication	7.4	8	7.6	1	7.86	3
Respect	7.4	8	5.9	9	7.29	4
Compatibility	7.2	10	6.33	6	6.43	11
Satisfactory terms	7.2	10	6.1	8	7	6
Long-term relations	7	12	6.7	5	7	6
Alignment	7	12	5.3	12	6.86	8
Adoption of ADR	4.6	14	3.9	14	5.71	14

The result of the rating of trust attributes were also separated into the two categories of partnering namely, project and strategic in order to investigate variations. Apart from 'Financial', 'Unity' and 'Long-term relations', all attributes were closely ranked with a maximum 3 units between the two categories as could be noted from Table 5.

'Financial' and 'Unity' which were both ranked 5th in project partnering were ranked 10th and 13th respectively in strategic partnering. 'Long-term relations' on the other hand is considered to be very critical in strategic partnering as it was ranked 3rd compared to the 11th ranking in project partnering.

Table 5. Relative importance of Trust Factors: Categories

Trust Attributes	Project		Strategic	
	Mean Rating	Ranking	Mean Rating	Ranking
Openness	8.36	1	8	1
Competence	8.27	2	7.18	4
Communication	7.73	3	7.55	2
Information flow	7.73	3	7.09	5
Financial	7.09	5	6.45	10
Unity	7.09	5	5.82	13
Respect	6.64	7	6.73	6
Satisfactory terms	6.55	8	6.73	6
Problem solving	6.55	8	6.36	11
Compatibility	6.5	10	6.64	8
Long-term relations	6.45	11	7.27	3
Alignment	5.82	12	6.55	9
Reputation	5.82	12	5.9	12
Adoption of ADR	5.55	14	3.73	14

5. Discussion

Among the 14 trust attributes identified in literature, 'openness and integrity of communication' is considered to be the most important irrespective of the roles of respondents or the category of partnering. This seems to suggest that failure of integrity which involves lying, cheating or hiding facts remains a major problem in the industry (Rosenfeld, et al., 1991; Jones & Saad, 2003). Openness is a key to the perception of goodwill of one's partner or the expectation that a partner intends to fulfil his responsibility in the relationship (Das & Teng, 2001; Lui & Ngo, 2004). Honest and truthful communication among the contracting parties will therefore have a positive effect on the trust level among contracting parties.

The first four attributes which were ranked relatively higher were openness, competence, effective communication and sufficient information flow. It could be noted that these are actions or attributes required in the day-to-day running of the project compared with other attributes which only affect one's perception of his partner prior to the formation of the partnering agreement. This seems to suggest that parties put more emphasis on developing and maintaining trust during the life of the project and not just on the development of trust prior to the formation of the agreement. This is supported by the dynamic nature of trust and the need put in effort in maintaining it (Rousseau, et al., 1998).

Moreover, it is also evident that those attributes which had lower ratings such as 'adoption of ADR techniques', 'alignment of effort and rewards', 'sense of unity', 'problem solving' and 'satisfactory terms' could all be achieved by means of the contractual agreement. Reputation and compatibility of one's partner could also be assessed prior to the selection of a partner. In contrast, the first four attributes mentioned in the preceding paragraph are not easily assessable prior to the selection of the partner. They could neither be provided for in a partnering agreement. These are areas where more risk are involved and require more reliance on the partners. Greater level of interdependence results in an increase in trust hence the higher level of importance attached to these attributes (Rousseau, et al., 1998; Jin & Ling, 2005).

The financial status of one's partner was seen to be more important by clients than by consultants and contractors. This attribute was ranked 3rd with a mean score of 8.2 while consultants and contractors ranked it 7th and 10th respectively. Traditionally, contractors have been associated with finding loopholes in contracts to maximize their profits. Clients view a contractor with a healthy financial status as trustworthy since the risk of making profits by finding loopholes in contract or applying unreasonable claims is lowered. The financial status of a contractor is thus viewed to be very important to the development of trust as far as clients are concerned.

Frequency and effectiveness of communication and long-term relations were considered to be more important to trust by consultants and contractors than by the clients. Communication, for example, was ranked 1st and 3rd by consultants and contractors 8th respectively while it was ranked by clients. Clients are usually represented by consultants in the day-to-day running of the project and are therefore not involved in communication at the level of frequency as by consultants and contractors. They are also less involved in the personal interaction that goes on between members of the project team. The level of trust of consultants and contractor is thus be affected more by the frequency of communication and long term relations.

The financial status and the sense of unity of one's partner are considered to be more important to the development of trust at the project level that at the strategic level. They were both ranked 5th in project partnering but ranked 10th and 13th respectively in strategic partnering. The financial status of one's partner is usually considered before the formation of a partnering agreement at the project level. It will thus be of little

significance at the strategic level since the partner would have already been considered at the project partnering level. Similarly a sense of unity is important at the project partnering level but should have already been achieved at the strategic level. This explains why 'financial status' and a 'sense of unity' affects the level of trust more in project partnering than in strategic partnering.

The reverse is true about 'long-term relations' which is seen to be more critical to the development of trust in strategic partnering than in project partnering. This attribute was ranked 11th and 3rd in project and strategic partnering respectively. This could be explained by the fact that project partnering is short-term in nature while strategic partnering is long-term (Beach, et al., 2005). This result also explains a recent study in Hong Kong in which 'long-term relations' was reported to be of less significance compared to studies elsewhere (Wong & Cheung, 2004; Wong & Cheung, 2005). The development of relational trust is based on positive expectations as a result information and personal experience concerning the reliability and dependability of one's partner which is obtained from previous interactions (Kadefors, 2004; Rousseau, et al., 1998). 'Long-term relations' is of less significance to the development of trust in project partnering because of the limitation in time.

6. Conclusions

The relationship between trust and partnering is not always linear suggesting that apart from 'trust' other elements are required to achieve success in partnering. Managers must thus be cautious not to overemphasize trust to the neglect of these other factors. Trust is also a dynamic phenomenon and it could develop, be built or decline in long standing relationship. It is therefore important at all stages in the partnering process either project or strategic. Effort is require not only in developing trust in the initial project partnering stage but also in maintaining it even during the strategic partnering stage.

Moreover, all 14 trust attributes identified in literature are considered to be of relevance to partnering success. 'Openness and integrity of communication' is seen to be the most critical trust factor. The other relatively more critical factors which include competence, effective communication and sufficient information flow are all action related attributes required in the day-to-day running of the project. This indicates that stakeholders put more emphasis on developing and maintaining trust during the life of the project and not only at the initial formation stage. These attributes are also critical for the reason that they are associated with higher risks as they are neither easily assessable prior to the selection of the partner nor be provided for in a partnering agreement.

The role of the stakeholder in the partnering arrangement also affects which attribute is considered more critical. The financial status of one's partner was seen to be more critical by clients than by consultants and contractors. This is due to the fact that clients view a contractor with a healthy financial status as trustworthy. Frequency and effectiveness of communication and long-term relations on the other hand are considered to be more important to trust by consultants and contractors than by the clients because contractors and consultants are more involved in the day-to-day interactions required in the running of the project.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the level of importance associated to an attribute is also affected by the category of partnering. The 'financial status' and the 'sense of unity of one's partner' are considered to be more important 'to the development of trust at the project level than at the strategic level. The reverse is true about 'long-term relations' which is seen to be more critical to the development of trust in strategic partnering than in project partnering.

This study also confirmed other characteristics of partnering identified in literature. Lack of commitment and the paying of 'lip-services' to partnering is still a major problem in the industry. Understanding a partner's working practices, organizations, drivers and goals as well as early involvement and equitable sharing of profits were all highlighted as critical points for success in partnering arrangements. The study also identified sustained future workload as an incentive for long-term commitment to be achieved among the parties and hence partnering success.

7. Recommendations

- Though trust is very important to the success of partnering, one must be cautious not to overemphasize it to the neglect of other factors. Such factors as efficient coordination support from top management, long-term commitment, effective communication and conflict resolution strategies are also critical to partnering success.
- Trust is also a dynamic phenomenon and it could develop or decline in the partnering relationship. For partnering to be successful, effort is thus required not only in developing trust in the initial project partnering stage but also in maintaining it during the strategic partnering stage.
- In an effort to develop trust in partnering, managers must focus more on those trust attributes that are neither assessed prior to the selection of the partner nor provided for in a partnering agreement since they associated with higher risks.
- Contractors in partnering arrangements must focus on maintaining a healthy financial status since it affects the level of trust they earn from clients.

8. Limitations

- Information for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire which gave a shallow but broad view of the industry on trust in partnering. More insight could have been gained into the issue if the results were further confirmed by means of interviews but this could not be done due to time constraint.
- The survey investigated the importance of the various trust attributes to the success of partnering. It did not however establish direct relationships between each of the trust attributes and partnering success.
- The basis on which respondents assessed the level of importance of the trust attributes was not clear from the study. Respondents could have ranked an attribute high either because it is seen to have greater impact on the success of partnering or for the reason that the attribute is much more difficult to achieve.

9. Future Research

Based on the limitations encounter on the study, the following are recommended for future research:

- The results of the survey could be tested by means of interviews or case studies in order to gain more depth into the role of trust in partnering.
- Investigating the direct relationship between each of the trust attribute and the success of partnering.
- Exploring the basis for which stakeholders assigned a level of importance to a particular attribute.
- Investigating further the reason why clients and contractors trust their partners much higher than consultants.

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