

Psychological Contract Violation: A Bridge between Unethical Behavior and Trust

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ABSTRACT

Formation of intentional relationships which increase the organizational restrictions has confirmed a challenging struggle for managers. The corporation survey of supply chain revealed that the offender of firm communicates the most undersized area of their supply chain. There are some other problems faced by an organization, including the problems of trust, psychological contracts and the ethics. All these problems are considered as main features of buyer and seller relationships and provide a basis of present study. Generally, there are some incidences in the organization for the study that are unwritten but exciting on the significant performance variables. Organization's commitment regarding the contentment of their promises, known as psychological contract, is one of the classifications that should be examined. Therefore, present study attempts to investigate the mediating role of experience of psychological contract violation (EPCV) on the relationship between unethical behavior (UEB) and trust (TRS). For this purpose, study utilized the data of 179 operational managers of manufacturing industry of Thailand. Study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) approach for investigating the empirical results. Study used measurement model for testing the reliability and validity of each item and construct. Structural model is used for testing the proposed hypotheses of the study. Path analysis is conducted for examining the direct and indirect effects of the variables. Results of the study shows that EPCV significantly mediates the negative relationship between UEB and TRS.

Keywords: Experience of psychological contract violation; Unethical behavior; Trust; Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

Inter organizational supportive behaviors i.e., collective arrangements are strongly linked with the supplier's trust. Alternatively, unethical business performs negatively affects this trust and disturb the long-term business dealings because unethical behaviors encourage negative promotion, considerable penalties and eventually decreased sales and revenue [1]. When the trust of supplier damage due to the unethical behavior of the buyers, then supplier start searching another business opportunity and start conversing negative information about buying firm with other suppliers [2]. [3] indicated that orally commended penalty is not organized by a party holding control because control is resulting from the society.

Formation of intentional relationships which increase the organizational restrictions has confirmed a challenging struggle for managers [4]. The corporation survey of supply chain revealed that the offender of firm communicates the most undersized area of their supply chain which shows beyond the problems of coordination and structure, there are some other problems that are face by an organization, including the problems of trusty, psychological contracts and the ethics [5]. All these problems are considered as main features of buyer and seller relationships and provide a basis of present study. Existing studies investigated the psychological and cognitive characteristics of handling the buyer-supplier relationship [6]. The area of buyer and seller relationship still under the discussion of researchers as they less focused on those activities which break down the trust [7] and [8]. Psychological contract is another reason of trust break down which is defined as emotional experience of

dissatisfaction, prevention and annoyance, attached with feelings of dissatisfaction [9], [10] and [11]. In a buyer-seller relationship, the seller endorses regular expectations from the buying firm. Similarly, buying firm also have some expectations from the supplier, which results dissension between parties if not full fill and thus leads to the violation of psychological contracts [6]. Basically, psychological contract violation is an emotional experience, if occurs, then parties do not want to be in contract as it breaks the trust among the buyer-seller relationship [12] and [13].

This paper, therefore, contributes to the existing literature by examining the violation of psychological contract between a buyer and a supplier. The study used psychological contract violation as a mediating variable for examining the effects of unethical behavior on the trust within a partnership. Author defines trust as a dependence of firm on the other entities that are engaged to willingly recognize their moralities [1] which suggests that psychological contract survives between the buyer and supplier and a supposed destruction of psychological contract occur by obvious unethical acts that fail to defend the right of others [14]. Present study, therefore, examined this occurrence, and pursue to define the role psychological contract violation on the relationship between ethics and trust.

Remaining paper is arranged as follow: section two shows the review of existing literature and construction of hypotheses, section three is about data and methodology, section four represent empirical findings of the data, section five is about the conclusion and discussion of the study.

Literature Review

This section presents the review of existing literature and construction of hypothesis

Unethical behavior (UEB) and Trust (TRS)

Literature revealed many studies which investigated the empirical relationship between ethical behavior and trust of consumers. [15] examined the relationship between ethical behavior of managers and the trust of customers. For this purpose, the study utilized the data from Mexico, Canada and US. Results of the study revealed the positive influence of manager's ethical behavior on building the trust of consumers. [15] examined the influence of ethical leadership behaviors on the trust of the followers. For this purpose, study utilized the data from 547 employees of European business corporation and revealed the positive relationship between ethical leadership behavior and the trust of followers. [16] also found the positive association between ethical leadership and the trust of consumers. In the literature of buyer and seller relationship, ethical disputes are regularly investigated from the perspective of purchasing management. [17] examined the impact of sellers' ethical behavior on buyer's trust. Study revealed the positive relationship between these two variables. Similarly, [18] showed the positive association between sellers' ethical behavior and buyers' trust. [19] investigated the relationship between business ethics and the trust of clients. For this purpose, the study utilized the data of manufacturing industry of Nigeria. Study indicated the positive influence of business ethics on the trust of clients. [20] indicated that unethical business behavior is very common among managers show deceitfulness in their behavior so for earning the profit. This behavior negatively affects the trust of customers. [21] worked on the UEB and showed the negative influence of UEB on the trust of customers. In the summary of above literature, it is proposed that most of the studies focused on the ethical behavior. Unethical behavior is still under the discussion of researchers. However, after reviewing the above literature, it is proposed that:

H₁ "There is negative relationship between unethical behavior and trust"

Unethical behavior (UEB) and experience of psychological contract violation (EPCV)

[22] examined the influence of UEB on the violation of psychological contract. For this purpose, the study utilized the data of Belgium and Finland. Study applies OLS model and revealed the negative association between UEB and the violation of psychological contract. [23] empirically tested the relationship between psychological contract violation and the intention of customers regarding the reuse of online merchant websites. Study further test that either this relationship is strengthening by the perceived structural assurance or not. author utilized the data of 234 respondents and showed that perceived structural assurance significantly moderated the negative relationship between psychological contract violation and customer's intention regarding the reuse of merchant websites. [24] done a valuable work. The study investigated the moderating role of organizational ethical climate on the relationship between UEB and the violation of psychological contract. For this purpose, the study utilized the data from 234 respondents. Study applied OLS regression models and revealed the positive effects of UEB on the violation of psychological contract. Study further showed that this relationship is moderated through the ethical climate of any organization. [25] indicated the

positive relationship between UEB and the psychological contract violation. Results of this study is based on the data of 253 respondents. After reviewing the above literature, it is proposed that:

H₂: "There is positive relationship between unethical behavior and the experience of psychological contract violation"

Experience of psychological contract violation (EPCV) and trust (TRS)

[26] examined the moderating role of TRS and EPSV on the association between realistic leadership and organizational deviancy. For this purpose, the study collected the data from 545 lecturers of 10 state universities of turkey. Results of the study showed the negative relationship between realistic leadership and organizational deviancy. Results of the study further showed that this relationship is significantly moderated by the TRS and EPCV. [27] investigated the empirical relationship between PCV and TST by utilizing the data of 236 managers of Indian textile firms. Study applied OLS regression model and found the significant relationship between PSV and TST. [28] examined the influence of PSV on TRS. In this regard, the study collected the data from 210 enterprises of china. Study applied SEM and showed the negative relationship between PSV and TST. Similarly, [29] also revealed the negative relationship between PCV and TST. Thus, it is assumed that:

H₃: "There is negative relationship between experience of psychological contract violation and trust"

Mediating role of EPCV

EPCV may occur in the deficiency of true destruction. It is not challenged in the appearance of actual destruction. Present study evaluates that "whether a supplier perceives unethical activities to have occurred or not". present study also considers the associated feelings of supplier i.e., abuse, irritation, annoyance and disappointment. Present study considers the probability of occurrences where the supplier observes the buyer to be engage in unethical activities. However, the supplier does not involve in the abusive feelings. This rare set of conditions may appear for different reasons i.e., perhaps during the period of buyer-seller relationship, the accepted criticism was the main reason behind this destruction. The supplier may have perceived an unethical behavior but assumes it an inconsequential matter and do not feel it a violence [30] and [31]. Thus, this situation shed a light on the ethics-psychological contract relationship. Therefore, present study considers EPSV as a mediating variable which explains that "why unethical behaviors result in a decreased level of trust". So, it is proposed that: H₄: "experience of psychological contract violation mediates the relationship between unethical behavior and trust"

Methodology

Sample and data collection

The study collected the data from the 179 operation managers of manufacturing industries of Thailand. Data are collected through a questionnaire, which is designed after the detailed study of literature. The area of present study is "behavior". Thus, different items related to marketing, organizational behavior, and operation management are included into the questionnaire. Questionnaire is based on 5-type Likert scale, starts from 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Questionnaire is comprising of two sections i.e., section A and section B.

Section A contains the information regarding the demographics of the respondents i.e., information about gender, salary, age, and qualification. While section B contains different items related to modeled variables. Questionnaire are voluntarily filled by the respondents as nobody was forced to respond.

Description of variables
Unethical behavior (UEB)

Study uses UEB as an independent variable (IV) which is measured through 7 items of deceitfulness. Deceitfulness is defined as a dishonest behavior i.e., convincing the people to believe in something that is not true.

Trust (TRS)

TRS is used as a dependent variable (DV) of the study. Study measures trust with the 6 items of benevolence, which is defined as an act of kindness.

Experience of Psychological contract violation (EPCV)

Study uses EPCV as a mediating variable (MV) of the study which creates a link between UEB and TRD. EPCV is defined as emotional experience of dissatisfaction, prevention and annoyance, attached with feelings of dissatisfaction. Questionnaire consists of 5 items of EPCV.

Econometric techniques

Study analyzes the data by using the software of SPLS, which uses variances-based technique of partial least square that explicates the measurement error and provide more accurate results as compare to OLS regression. Moreover, SPLS is helpful in the case of small data files. Study applies structural equational modeling (SEM) for the empirical estimation of results. SEM is comprising of two models i.e., measurement model and structural model. Measurement model tests the reliability and validity of the data through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). While structural model is used for estimating the standardized coefficients. Structural model is obtained with the help of bootstrapping process. Finally, study conducted path analysis for estimating the direct and indirect effects of independent variable (UEB) on the dependent variable (TRS).

Econometric models

Study uses following econometric models for testing the proposed hypotheses of the study:

Models for Direct Effects

1. $TRS = \beta_0 + \beta_1(UEB) + \mu$ -----
(1)
2. $EPCV = \beta_0 + \beta_1(UEB) + \mu$ -----
--- (2)
3. $TRS = \beta_0 + \beta_1(EPCV) + \mu$ -----
----- (3)

Model for Indirect Effect

4. $TRS = \beta_0 + \beta_1(UEB) + \beta_2(EPCV) + \mu$ -----
----- (4)

Where: “TRS is trust, UEB is unethical behavior, EPCV is Experience of Psychological contract violation, β_0 is intercept, β_1 - β_2 are coefficients, and μ is normally distributed error term/residuals”.

Empirical Results

This section presents the empirical results to analyze the mediating impact of UEB on TRS through EPCV.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics of study variables. Table shows the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of survey items. Result shows that survey is based on 17 items. Out of which, the response of eight items vary from one to five, response of 3 items vary from one to four, items of three items vary from two to five and the response of two items vary from two to four. Mean value in table 1 shows the average response of participants, varies from 2.235 to 3.994. Values of standard deviation show the dispersion of the data, varies from 0.224 to 1.996. Mean and standard deviation of UEB1, UEB2, UEB3, UEB4, UEB5, UEB6, EPCV1, EPCV2, EPCV3, EPCV4, EPCV5, TRS1, TRS2, TRS3, TRS4, TRS5, TRS6 is 3.364, 3.546, 3.905, 3.347, 3.459, 3.994, 3.385, 3.455, 3.634, 3.562, 3.395, 3.356, 2.948, 3.432, 3.553, 2.235, 2.562 and 1.223, 1.299, 0.224, 1.453, 0.443, 1.774, 0.355, 0.566, 1.335, 0.567, 1.949, 1.356, 0.456, 1.345, 1.996, 0.678, 0.836 respectively

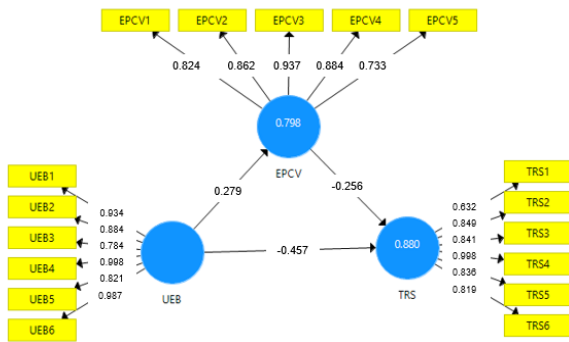
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| Items | Mean | Min | Max | Standard Deviation |
|-------|-------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| UEB1 | 3.364 | 1 | 5 | 1.223 |
| UEB2 | 3.546 | 1 | 4 | 1.299 |
| UEB3 | 3.905 | 1 | 5 | 0.224 |
| UEB4 | 3.347 | 2 | 5 | 1.453 |
| UEB5 | 3.459 | 1 | 5 | 0.443 |
| UEB6 | 3.994 | 1 | 4 | 1.774 |
| EPCV1 | 3.385 | 1 | 5 | 0.355 |
| EPCV2 | 3.455 | 2 | 5 | 0.566 |
| EPCV3 | 3.634 | 1 | 5 | 1.335 |
| EPCV4 | 3.562 | 1 | 4 | 0.567 |
| EPCV5 | 3.395 | 1 | 5 | 1.949 |
| TRS1 | 3.356 | 2 | 5 | 1.356 |
| TRS2 | 2.948 | 2 | 4 | 0.456 |
| TRS3 | 3.432 | 1 | 5 | 1.345 |
| TRS4 | 3.553 | 1 | 5 | 1.996 |
| TRS5 | 2.235 | 2 | 4 | 0.678 |
| TRS6 | 2.562 | 1 | 5 | 0.836 |

Measurement Model

Figure 1 shows the measurement model of the study. Measurement model of the study comprises on three latent variables i.e., UEB, EPCV and TRS. UEB is the independent, TRS in the dependent and EPCV is the mediating variable of the study. Measurement model is based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which is used for testing the reliability and validity of different item and constructs. Measurement model tests the convergent validity of each item and construct, reliability and internal consistency of each construct, and construct validity.

Figure 1: Measurement Model



Convergent validity of items

Table 2 shows the values factor loadings of each item of the construct. Values of factor loading are used to test the convergent validity of each item. According to the rule, the value of factor loading must exceed from 0.4. In present case, the value of factor loading for each item exceeds from 0.4 i.e., the loading value of UEB1, UEB2, UEB3, UEB4, UEB5, UEB6, EPCV1, EPCV2, EPCV3, EPCV4, EPCV5, TRS1, TRS2, TRS3, TRS4, TRS5, TRS6 is 0.934, 0.884, 0.784, 0.998, 0.821, 0.987, 0.824, 0.862, 0.937, 0.8844, 0.733, 0.632, 0.849, 0.841, 0.998, 0.836, and 0.819 respectively. So, it is concluded that convergent validity is present in each item.

Table 2: Factor Loadings

| | ENT | PSKAP | PSN |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| UEB1 | 0.934 | | |
| UEB2 | 0.884 | | |
| UEB3 | 0.784 | | |
| UEB4 | 0.998 | | |
| UEB5 | 0.821 | | |
| UEB6 | 0.987 | | |
| EPCV1 | | 0.824 | |
| EPCV2 | | 0.862 | |
| EPCV3 | | 0.937 | |
| EPCV4 | | 0.884 | |
| EPCV5 | | 0.733 | |
| TRS1 | | | 0.632 |
| TRS2 | | | 0.849 |
| TRS3 | | | 0.841 |
| TRS4 | | | 0.998 |
| TRS5 | | | 0.836 |
| TRS6 | | | 0.819 |

Composite reliability & Validity, Discriminate Validity and Correlations

In Table 3 (Panel A) Cronbach’s Alpha tests the reliability and internal consistency of the data. According to the rule, the value of Cronbach’s alpha must exceed from 0.4 in order to satisfying the condition of reliability. In present case, the value of Cronbach’s alpha exceeds from 0.4 i.e., the value of Cronbach’s alpha for UEB, EPCV and TRS is 0.994, 0.873 and 0.883 respectively. So, it is concluded that the data of each construct is reliable. Composite reliability tests the construct validity of the data. According to the rule, the value of composite reliability

must exceed from 0.5 in order to satisfy the condition of construct validity. In present case, the value of CR exceeds from 0.5. i.e., the value of CR of UEB, EPCV and TRS in 0.863, 0.925, 0.885 respectively. Hence, it is verified that construct validity is present in the data. Average variance extracted (AVE) tests the convergent validity of each construct. The value of AVE must exceed from 0.5 for satisfying the condition. In present case, the value of AVE exceeds from 0.5 i.e., the value of AVE for UEB, EPCV, and TRS is 0.863, 0.973 and 0.825 respectively. So, it is concluded that convergent validity is also present in each construct.

Table 3 (Panel B) shows the results of discriminate validity. The study used Former-Larker criterion for testing the discriminate validity of the data. Former-Larker criteria measures the discriminate validity of the data with the help of correlation table. According to this criterion, the diagonal values of the correlation table must exceed from the remaining values. In present case, the diagonal values i.e., 0.993, 0.942 and 0.893 (shown in bold) exceeds from 0.673, 0.715 and 0.773 (remaining values of the table). Thus, it is verified that discriminate validity is present in the data.

Table 3 (Panel C) shows the results of correlation matrix. Correlation matrix is used to test the problem of multicollinearity in the data. Table shows that the value of correlation between EPCV and UEB is 0.11, the value of correlation between TRS and UEB is 0.09, the value of correlation between TRS and EPCV is 0.17. Result reveals that there is not any problem of multicollinearity in the data as all the values are less than 0.5.

Table 3: Composite Reliability & Validity, Discriminate Validity and Correlations

| Panel A: Composite Reliability and Validity | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Variables | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
| UEB | 0.994 | 0.863 | 0.863 |
| EPCV | 0.873 | 0.925 | 0.973 |
| TRS | 0.883 | 0.883 | 0.825 |
| Panel B: Discriminate Validity | | | |
| Variables | UEB | EPCV | TRS |
| UEB | 0.993 | | |
| EPCV | 0.673 | 0.942 | |
| TRS | 0.715 | 0.773 | 0.893 |
| Panel C: Correlations | | | |
| Variables | UEB | EPCV | TRS |
| UEB | 1 | | |
| EPCV | 0.11 | 1 | |
| TRS | 0.09 | 0.17 | 1 |

Structural Model

Figure 2 shows the structural model of the study which is obtained through the process of bootstrapping. This model deals with the issue of multicollinearity. Further, structural model comprises on the path analysis which is used to obtain the direct and indirect effect of independent variable on the dependent variable.

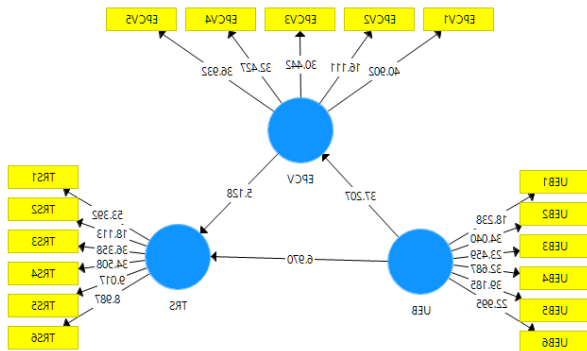


Figure 2: Structural Model

Path analysis

Table 4 shows the results of path analysis which is used to analyze the mediating impact of UEB on TRS through EPCV. The table is comprising of two panels. Panel A shows the direct impact of variables whereas panel B shows the indirect impact of variables.

Table 4: Path Analysis

| Models | Original Sample (O) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | P Values | Decision |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Panel A: Direct Effects | | | | |
| UEB→TRS | -0.4573*** | 0.152 | 0.000 *** | Accepted |
| UEB→EPCV | 0.2793*** | 0.265 | 0.000 *** | Accepted |
| EPCV→TRS | -0.2564*** | 0.173 | 0.000 *** | Accepted |
| Panel B: Indirect Effects | | | | |
| UEB→EPCV→TRS | -0.3655** | 0.044 | 0.067 * | Accepted |

Note: “***, ** and * shows the significance at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% respectively”

Conclusion and Discussion

Inter organizational supportive behaviors i.e., collective arrangements are strongly linked with the supplier’s trust. Alternatively, unethical business performs negatively affects this trust and disturb the long-term business dealings because unethical behaviors encourage negative promotion, considerable penalties and eventually decreased sales and revenue. When the trust of supplier damage due to the unethical behavior of the buyers, then supplier start searching another business opportunity. Supplier converse negative information regarding buying firm with other suppliers which leads the violation of psychological contract. Psychological contract is another reason of trust break down which is defined as emotional experience of dissatisfaction, prevention and annoyance, attached with feelings of dissatisfaction. This paper, therefore, contributes to the existing literature by examining the violation of psychological contract between a buyer and a supplier. The study used psychological contract violation as a mediating variable for examining the effects of unethical behavior on the trust within a partnership. For this purpose, the study collected the data from 179 operation managers of manufacturing industries of Thailand. Study applied structural equation modeling approach for examining the empirical results.

In panel A, path coefficient of model 1 (UEB→TRS) reveals the significant and negative relationship between UEB and TRS at the level of 1%. Result shows that 1-unit increase in UEB tends to reduce TRS by 0.4573 units. Thus, H1 “there is negative relationship between unethical behavior and trust” is accepted by the study. Path coefficient of model 2 (UEB→EPCV) is also significant at the level of 1%, showing that 1-unit increase in UEB tends to increase EPCV by 0.2793 units. So, H2 “there is positive relationship between unethical behavior and the experience of psychological contract violation” is also supported. Path coefficient of model 3 (EPCV→TRS) also showing the negative and significant association between EPCV and TRS. For instance, 1-unit increase I, EPCV tends to reduce TRS by 0.2564 units. hence, H3 “there is negative relationship between experience of psychological contract violation and trust” is also accepted.

In panel B, the coefficient of model 4 (UEC→EPCV→TRS) is significant at the level of 5%, showing that EPCV significantly mediates the relationship between UEB and TRS. Comparing the outcomes of model 4 with model 1, the coefficient of UEB is reduces from 0.4573 to 0.3655, showing that 1-unit increase in UEB tends to reduce TRS by 0.3655 units. The H4 “experience of psychological contract violation mediates the relationship between unethical behavior and trust” of the study is accepted.

Measurement model is used for testing the reliability and validity of different item and constructs. Structural model is used for testing the proposed hypothesis of the study. Study conducted path analysis for testing the direct and direct effects of the variables

Results of the study revealed the interesting findings: first, the study shows the negative and significant relationship between URB and TRS. Results are consistent with [17], [19], [20], [21] & [21] Secondly, results of the study showed EPCV significantly mediates the negative relationship between URB and TRS. Results are consistent with [30], [26] & [25].

Present study has some limitations: firstly, this study is conducted on the manufacturing industries of Thailand, future researchers may conduct replica of this study on different industries. Secondly, future researchers may conduct cross-industry comparison while conducting replica of this study. third, future researchers may explore some other aspects to extend this buyer-seller relationship examination i.e., future researchers can investigate that “how does the buyer assess the ethicality of his behavior”? “how ethical does a buyer perceive the supplier to be”? Further, future researchers can also explore the factors that contributes in the violation of psychological contract.

The outputs acquired from the analysis provide important and interesting implications for the management of relationship between supplier and buyer. First, the study empirically explains the importance of PCV (psychological contract violation) as mediator variable to association between TRT and UEB. The results given in this study have important and practical implications. Participants in supplier and buyer relationship should be familiar not only of activities of company's legislatures, but also for acuties upheld by partner company. The study shows that these acuties are significant driver of the feelings of PCV and TRT levels. Secondly, study also indicates that there is a positive association between TRT and perceived UEB. It is of vital importance for buyers understanding that levels of TRT may be diminishing independent of EPCV of suppliers. A firm of buyer cannot rely solely on the suppliers' signs of hindrance and disenchantment as indicator that of how having the trust on supplier perceive buyers to be. Findings are generalized to all the supplier and buyer company interested in maintaining mutually rewarding association with other companies.

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