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Commitment, Trust and Relationships in the Forest Industry – Perceptions of the Finnish Private Forest Owners regarding Industrial Buyers of Round-wood

During the last fifteen years relational matters entered the marketing scene. The concepts of commitment and trust, satisfaction, partnerships and long-term orientation have received a wealth of both disciplinary and practitioner interest. Apart from this flux of interest the issues itself have a much longer history in marketing. Already in the 70's Bagozzi's classical ideas of marketing being exchange reflect this. Thus, the core questions is why relationships have become so important now? It seems that the answer lies in a paradox of modern competition – while the competition in-

creases it also leads to natural incentives to ally. Thus, the question is what is at the core of forming networks and closer relationships? How can we understand and explain such issues? Are normal tools of management and marketing suitable for the new development? How could we do better if we understood what relationships are about? These are the timely questions that this research approaches. While they are certainly huge questions as such, and a lot of disciplinary work has been done on this both in the US, Imp and Nordic School arenas, this the research was able to provide some new answers to how an individual, on the perceptual level, behaves in market relational settings.

The core in answering the arising questions was to combine both the marketing and the social psychological explanations of how relationships function. By bridging this gap a simple and clear model of relational engagements was built. However, the limitation naturally arises out of the single dyadic setting that was used to test the model. But, this one-sided dyadic view was warranted because by understanding how an individual perceives "the other" one is able to build a general view into how the social elements of networking affect the whole network efficiency (i.e. propensities of individual members to co-operate, exit a relationship, trust the other, etc.).

The results paint a picture of marketing relational setting where propensity to co-operate and trust ones relational counterpart arise out of familiarity, the psychological costs and the psychological rewards of the relational engagement. Even though the application area was a special one the intuitive logic of the model provides a broader spectrum of relevant fields. The result frame relationships as intuitive or emotional by nature. The model gives a de-

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scription of the content of the intuition or emotion. Thus it provides the relationship manager with a view into how to manage the relationship. ■