Managing supply chain relationships in the hospitality services: An empirical study of hotels and restaurants

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ABSTRACT

Limited research examines the effects of interorganizational trust and interdependence on the relationship quality between supply chain partners in the hospitality services. It is also not well understood how the interorganizational joint team manages the relationships between hospitality firms and their suppliers. Drawing on the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory, we propose a model and hypotheses to articulate the mediation effect of joint teamwork on the relationships between interorganizational trust, interdependence, and relationship quality. We rigorously analyze survey data from hotel and restaurant procurement managers. Our findings confirm that interorganizational trust and interdependence have significant effects on joint teamwork. Meanwhile, the teamwork mediates the effects of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality. Our work enriches the understanding of supply chain relationships in the hospitality services, and provides meaningful insights for the hospitality firms to manage supply chains. Finally, we conclude our work with suggestions for future research.

1. Introduction

As important hospitality service providers, hotels and restaurants collaborate with suppliers for the procurement of drinks, food, culinary materials, laundering linen, and other in-bound logistics to ensure the efficient delivery of daily hospitality services (Fantazy et al., 2010; Pullman and Rodgers, 2010; Smith and Xiao, 2008; Song, 2011). In such circumstance, they are heavily engaged in coordination and integration with various suppliers, and continuously strive for excellent services through cooperation with various business partners in complementary business activities. Hence, the management of interorganizational relationship between the hospitality firms and their suppliers becomes an emerging issue (Fantazy et al., 2010; Ku et al., 2011; Murphy and Smith, 2009; Wang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2009).

Chathoth and Olsen (2003), Medina-Muñoz and García-Falcón (2000), and Theuvsen (2004) address that interorganizational relationship is important for hospitality firms. Schermerhorn (1975) defines interorganizational relationship as the deliberate relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for joint accomplishment of individual operating goals. It is found that interorganizational relationship is an interdependent and trust-based mutual commitment between organizational partners with common goals in a long-term orientation (Aiken and Haige, 1968; Levin and White, 1961; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). In line with this vein, a supply chain is such a cooperation that handles interorganizational relationship, manages operations across organizational boundaries, reduces operational costs, and utilizes resources and capacities of supply chain partners (Mentzer et al., 2000; Song, 2011; Zhang et al., 2009).

A literature review suggests that empirical studies are valuable to reveal the mechanism of interorganizational relationship and provide insights for effectively managing the relationship with suppliers (Kim and Cha, 2002; Medina-Muñoz and García-Falcón, 2000; Soltani and Wilkinson, 2010; Theuvsen, 2004). Although existing empirical studies examine the supply chains relationships in marketing and distribution channels (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Cannon and Perreault, 1999; Heide and John, 1990), limited research is carried out to examine the antecedents and consequences of interorganizational relationship management in the hospitality service context, and how hotels and restaurants effectively manage their supply chains to handle procurement and in-bound logistics with suppliers (Alford, 2005; Murphy and Smith, 2009; Smith and Xiao, 2008).

In particular, interorganizational joint teamwork plays an important role in establishing and sustaining interorganizational relationship (Aldrich and Herker, 1977; Schopler, 1987; Soltani and Wilkinson, 2010). The joint team is formed by the employees at least two persons from the bilateral organizations being

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involved in a supply chain. The team members serve as the representatives of their own organizations to facilitate the efficient flows of information, materials, and goods. As a result, the joint teamwork strengthens interorganizational cooperation, enhances relationship quality and capitalizes the value of interorganizational relationship (Ferguson et al., 2004; Narus and Anderson, 1995; Stock, 2006). Therefore, it is meaningful to empirically investigate the effect of joint teamwork on the relationship quality of hospitality service supply chains and provide insights for managing hotel and restaurant procurement operations.

This study aims to contribute to hospitality management literature by empirically examining the antecedents and consequences of interorganizational relationship in the hospitality services, with a particular focus on the mediation effect of joint teamwork on the relationships between interorganizational trust, interdependence, and relationship quality in the context of hospitality supply chains. Drawing on the social exchange theory and resource dependence theory, we design a mediation model and hypotheses. Thereafter, we conduct structural equation modelling and mediation analysis using survey data collected from the procurement managers of the hotels and restaurants in China.

Our work provides theoretically and practically useful insights for hospitality firms to manage their interorganizational relationships. Specifically, our empirical results confirm that interorganizational trust and interdependence are the determinants of relationship quality, and joint teamwork leverages the influences of the interorganizational trust and interdependence, accomplishes the common goals of supply chains partners, and sustains the trustful and interdependent interorganizational relationship with suppliers. Finally, we provide suggestions to future research, and offer practical implications for managing supply chains in the hospitality services.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

The social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978) and the resource dependence theory (Hillman et al., 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) are theoretical foundations of supply chain relationships, as they essentially conceptualize supply chains as cooperative mechanisms to accomplish mutual organizational goals (Aiken and Haige, 1968; Fantazy et al., 2010; Levin and White, 1961; Theuvsen, 2004). These theories also lay theoretical underpinnings for the design of our research model. As depicted in Fig. 1, the model includes such constructs as interorganizational trust, interdependence, joint teamwork, and relationship quality. International trust and interdependence are antecedents of joint teamwork, while joint teamwork is assumed to mediate the effects of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality. Below are the articulations of theoretical background and hypotheses.

2.1. The social exchange theory and resource dependence theory

The social exchange theory posits that, with the expectation of positively economic outcomes, organizations carry out exchanges of materials and goods and perform reciprocal interactions to pursue not only self-interests but also mutual benefits (Emerson, 1976; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978). However, this process involves risks, unspecified obligations, and opportunistic behaviour of exchange counterparts. Therefore, organizations must develop mutual trust and establish interdependent relations to reduce the risks and mitigate opportunistic behaviour. In addition, in order to maintain long-term relationship, firms must invest resources such as manpower, information, and relation specific investment to enhance the quality of interorganizational relationship in terms

of satisfaction, commitment, and sustainability. Therefore, as a core theoretical construct of the social exchange theory, interorganizational trust has been adopted to examine interorganizational relationship in various contexts (Aiken and Haige, 1968; Medina-Muñoz and García-Falcón, 2000; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

On the other hand, the resource dependence theory assumes that organizations operate in an environment of scarce resources. It asserts that organizations are interdependent, because they are unable to be self-sufficient in the competitive marketplace. They have to be involved in interorganizational cooperation and the acquisition of goods, services, and resources from different suppliers. Therefore, interdependence is a core theoretical and inherent factor behind the establishment of interorganizational relationship. It has been stressed that empirical studies should examine the interdependence, and reveal its consequential causality in interorganizational relationship (Hillman et al., 2009; Pfeffer and Salancilk, 1978).

The existing literature shows that the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory are theoretical underpinnings of interorganizational relationship (Medina-Muñoz and García-Falcón, 2000; Theuvsen, 2004). It has been emphasized that it is necessary to identify the consequence of interorganizational trust and interdependence in interorganizational relationship (Gulati and Sytch, 2007; Hillman et al., 2009; Pfeffer and Salancilk, 1978). Therefore, we apply the above-mentioned theories and deploy interorganizational trust and interdependence as relational antecedents to examine the quality of interorganizational relationship in the hospitality context of service supply chains.

2.2. Relationship quality

In our research model, we use relationship quality as the endogenous construct to represent the goodness of interorganizational relationship in the supply chain context. The existing literature evidences that the evaluation of interorganizational relationship has been studied with regard to relationship success (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Jin et al., 2012; Medina-Muñoz and García-Falcón, 2000), partnership success (Mohr and Spekman, 1994), relationship value (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), and expectation of continuity (Kim and Cha, 2002). Particularly, relationship quality adopted in our work is a commonly recognized concept for the assessment of interorganizational relationship (Crosby et al., 1990; Jap et al., 1999; Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Fynes et al., 2004).

The existing literature shows that there are various views in terms of the definition of relationship quality (Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Fynes et al., 2004; Jin et al., 2012). Through carefully cross-fertilizing and scrutinizing current understanding, we consider that relationship quality at the interorganizational level reflects the organizational representative's perception of and intention towards a supply chain relationship. Therefore, we define relationship quality in this study as the extent to which the supply chain partners satisfy with the on-going relation, have mutual commitment, and intend to continue the relation in the future.

Our definition of relationship quality is consistent with the mainstream view in the literature. Relationship quality is a concept, which may be manifested by the variables of satisfaction, commitment, and long-term orientation to the supply chain relationship. First, satisfaction is defined as the cognitive and affective outcome resulting from positive work experience with supply chain partners (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Fynes et al., 2004). In addition, commitment is defined as the enduring desire or willingness of the partners to maintain the on-going relationships (Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Finally, long-term orientation refers to the expectation of the benefits resulting from supply chain operations in the future (Ganesan, 1994).
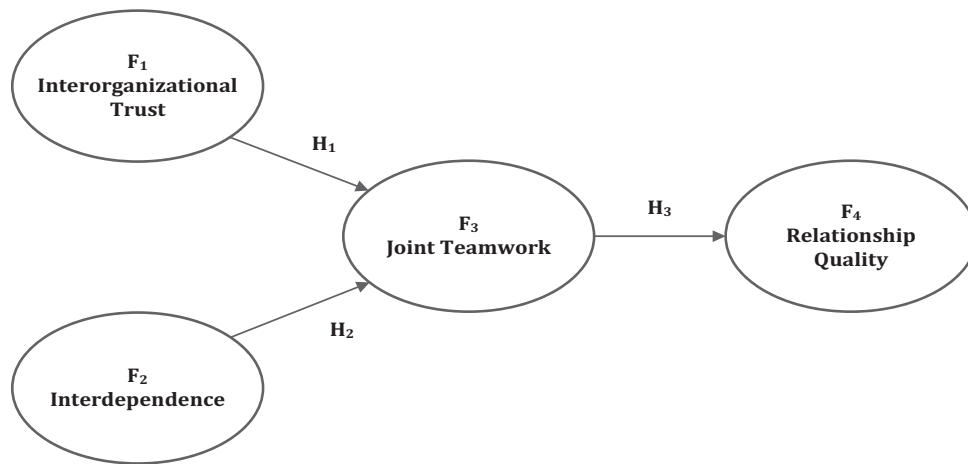
Fig. 1. The mediation effect of joint teamwork on relationship quality.

2.3. Joint teamwork

Interorganizational joint teamwork has been an effective response to the increasing demand of boundary-spanning manpower for managing interorganizational relationship, which has been practiced in services, supply and purchasing, sales management, and new product development (Ferguson et al., 2004; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Stock, 2006). According to Aldrich and Herker (1977) and Schopler (1987), joint teamwork can be defined as the work done by team members on behalf of their own organizations in an interorganizational setting. The team members have common goals and commitment to their interorganizational cooperation, and interactively work on interorganizational communication, planning, negotiation, coordination, and problem-solving in the process of supply chain operations.

Joint teamwork contributes to interorganizational relationship, because the team members carry out activities cross organizational boundary, complete joint projects, implement information systems and deploy shared resources, capabilities and knowledge to generate mutually beneficial outputs (Ferguson et al., 2004; Stock, 2006). More importantly, through these supply chain activities, the members develop and continue a workable relationship with the supply chain partner, and in such a way, their joint teamwork links the bilateral organizations together. In addition, the team members are responsible for strengthening the relationship, and working with partner towards win–win outcomes (Narus and Anderson, 1995; Day, 2000).

As the boundary theory notes, interorganizational teamwork entails considerable challenges (Aldrich and Herker, 1977). First, the team members may be required by their own organization to protect confidential information and absorb knowledge from the partner. This implies the goal conflicts existing in interorganizational cooperation (Aldrich and Herker, 1977; Stock, 2006). Second, though the organization instructs its team members to maintain healthy relationship, reduce relationship uncertainty, and improve the relationship with the partners, little effort is given to nurture close working relationship of the team members (Ferguson et al., 2004). Third, frictions and suspicions in the joint team may occur, because the team members from different corporate cultures may have different perceptions and understanding of the teamwork. Such frictions may make the teamwork dysfunctional and even damage interorganizational relationship between supply chain partners (de Jong et al., 2004).

Therefore, the joint teamwork is critical for the goodness and continuity of interorganizational relationship. It is desirable that joint teamwork can effectively leverage the influences of interorganizational trust and interdependence, minimize the conflicts and frictions in interorganizational cooperation, enhance relationship quality, and realize the cooperative advantages in supply chains (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Mohr and Spekman, 1994).

2.4. Interorganizational trust and joint teamwork

Interorganizational trust has been conceptualized as a critical concept and determinant of social exchange and interorganizational relationship (Gulati and Sytch, 2007; Zaheer et al., 1998). Pertaining to the definition of trust, Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) believe "trust as one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." In the same vein, Ring and Van de Ven (1994) define trust as faith in the moral integrity of exchange partners, which can lead to social psychological bonds of common goals, sentiments, and relationship for mitigating exchange uncertainties.

As the interorganizational joint team members are supply chain partners' representatives, we define interorganizational trust as the members' collective perception, belief and expectation of reliably predicting the actions performed by the partners to fulfil promises. In relationship management, Morgan and Hunt (1994) emphasize that trust is the key issue of relational exchanges, because it incorporates the core value of social exchange theory into interorganizational cooperation. When an organization has trust in its supply chain partners, they are willing to share information and develop cooperative relationship through the joint teamwork with their partners. Eventually, both the organization and its supply chain partners may benefit from reduced counterpart risks and increased market opportunity through collaboration in product and service development (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Handfield and Bechtel, 2002; Kang and Hyun, 2012; Zaheer and Venkatraman, 1995).

The presence of interorganizational trust indicates the cooperative mind-sets of the supply chain partners and their joint team members. It also reduces transactional costs and enhances interorganizational relationship quality, because interorganizational trust may foster a harmonious culture and mutual reliance, which should motivate the team members to develop and maintain cooperative relationship. It may also lead supply chain partners and their joint team members to dedicatedly share information and resources, so as to enhance the effectiveness of the joint teamwork (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Stock, 2006; Zaheer et al., 1998). Generalizing from the above arguments, we propose:

H₁. Interorganizational trust positively affects the joint teamwork of supply chain partners.

2.5. Interdependence and joint teamwork

The resource dependence theory assumes that organizations are unable to be self-sufficient with respect to the resources, capabilities, and internal sustainable strength necessary to meet the challenges of environmental uncertainty and market fluctuations (Hillman et al., 2009; Ku et al., 2011; Pfeffer and Salancilk, 1978). Because organizations have to seek external resources to expand their capacities, interdependence is an inherent determinant of interorganizational relationship (Heide and John, 1990; Gundlach and Cadotte, 1994; Gulati and Sytch, 2007). Therefore, we define the interdependence as perceived mutual dependence of organizations being involved in the supply chains.

The relational view (Dyer and Singh, 1998) is a sound theoretical foundation for deploying the interdependence as interorganizational resources. In line with this view, we consider the interdependence as supply chain resources for partners. First, the perceived interdependence is a relational tie developed from previous interactions, which mutually bonds partners to work together. Through joint teamwork, the partners can explore the idiosyncratic or relationship specific assets including proprietary information, knowledge, and technical know-how developed from joint teamwork and mutual investment (Dyer, 2000; Dyer and Singh, 1998). Second, the interdependence provides strategic safeguards for the partners to control opportunistic behaviour, reduce counterpart risks in collaboration, and enhance relationship quality (Jap et al., 1999). Third, the interdependence is necessary to derive relational rents that reduce negotiation and transaction costs, improve operations efficiency, and respond to markets and customers (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Dahlstrom et al., 1996; Dyer, 2000; Kang and Hyun, 2012).

It is noted that if an organization recognizes the resource implications and benefits from the interdependence, it should work with its suppliers to form a joint team to accomplish interorganizational activities through joint teamwork, and maintain the cooperative interorganizational relationship (Heide and John, 1990; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Johnson, 1999; Pullman and Rodgers, 2010; Stock, 2006). Cannon and Perreault (1999) address when organizations perceive their interdependence, they tend to cooperate with partners, and encourage operational staff to strengthen the cooperation relationship. Johnson (1999) also stresses that perceived interdependence motivates an organization to form an interorganizational team to work together with its business partner. Based on the reasoning above, we propose:

H₂. Interorganizational interdependence positively affects the joint teamwork of supply chain partners.

2.6. Mediation effect of joint teamwork

The deployment of interorganizational teamwork to manage the supply chain activities is an increasingly popular practice in business to business operations (Ferguson et al., 2004; Narus and Anderson, 1995; Stock, 2006). An interorganizational team is the taskforce consisting of staff from bilateral business partners who act as boundary spanners between the firms, and work together in executing routine and specific activities. According to Narus and Anderson (1995) and Stock (2006), the responsibilities of the joint teamwork may include: (1) coordinating pre-determined and scheduled business activities, (2) carrying out operational activities with certainty, quality, reliability, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness, (3) communicating with partner's boundary spanners, and (4) solving the various problems that might interfere with the stability of interorganizational business operations.

In addition, joint teamwork is an important contributor to the goodness of supply chain relationship (Stock, 2006). Within the joint team, members should share a similar role identity, work in physical and social proximity, and swiftly cross-fertilize each other's systems and work styles with new ideas, suggestions, knowledge and skills for co-adaptation (Ferguson et al., 2004; Stock, 2006). According to Day (2000), if supply chain partners and the joint team members have the motivation to closely work together and stay in relationship, they tend to make interpersonal and interorganizational investments in such an interactive cooperation, which may lead to the development of close relationship bonds.

Furthermore, the joint team members play a role in shaping the evolutionary process of interorganizational relationship, because the joint teamwork can reduce interorganizational suspicion and frictions, increase mutual commitment to cooperation, and facilitate business transactions (Ferguson et al., 2004). It is predictable that the joint teamwork can transfer interorganizational trust to supply chain relationship, and transform the interdependence as supply chain resources into relationship quality in terms of satisfaction, commitment, and sustain the relationship in the long-term perspective. Therefore, we propose:

H₃. The joint teamwork concurrently mediates the effects of interorganizational trust and interdependence on the relationship quality of supply chain partners.

3. Method

3.1. Questionnaire development

In the process of questionnaire design, we adapted the measures that were verified in the existing studies, and used two rigorous approaches to deal with the observable variables associated with the constructs in our research model. First, we adapted the observable variables that had been documented and tested in the literature. Second, we synthesized and created some observable variables based on the relevant findings in the existing literature (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). As a result, we designed a preliminary questionnaire in English.

At the same time, we adopted an *emic* approach suggested by Sekaran (1983) and Farh et al. (2006), and translated the preliminary questionnaire into a Chinese version. First, we carried out a pilot study to examine the Chinese questionnaire. We invited several procurement managers from hotels to comment on the question items and questionnaire design. Second, we performed a back-translation from the Chinese version to a new English version. Then, we compared and refined the versions of English questionnaires, and translated the revised English version of the questionnaire into a new Chinese version again in striving for the methodological and conceptual equivalence. Thereafter, we requested twenty procurement managers from different hotels to review the Chinese version of the questionnaire, and offer suggestions for further improvement of the question items and questionnaire design. According to the feedback from these managers, we finalized the questionnaire for the survey.

3.2. Measurement

We used multiple observable variables to fabricate each of the constructs in our research model (Hair et al., 2010). At the time of designing the questionnaire, we reviewed the literature and adapted the relevant measures from the existing studies to formulate the measurement items.

First, we adapted the items to measure inter-organizational trust from Zaheer et al. (1998) with some refinements in the light of hotel supply chain context. Second, we derived five items to measure interdependence according to the measurements suggested by Gundlach and Cadotte (1994), and Gulati and Sytch (2007). Third,

Table 1
Constructs, measurement, and reliability test.

Construct and observable variables	Loading (t-value)	α	CR
F_1. Interorganizational trust		0.876	0.891
The relationship with the supplier can be characterized as mutual trusting	0.868 (14.7)		
The supplier keeps the promises it makes to my hotel/restaurant	0.778 (12.1)		
My hotel/restaurant is sure that what the supplier says is true	0.756 (11.9)		
The supplier fulfils its commitment exactly as specified	0.749 (11.1)		
The supplier concerns my hotel/restaurant's benefits when making decisions	0.725 (10.7)		
F_2. Interdependence		0.849	0.855
My hotel/restaurant business operations are dependent on the supplier's cooperation	0.643 (7.30)		
The supplier is my hotel/restaurant's most appropriate supplier	0.668 (7.69)		
The supplier is not important to my hotel/restaurant's service operations (R)	0.726 (7.92)		
My hotel/restaurant and the supplier have an indispensable relation	0.759 (8.77)		
Allying and operating with the supplier have beneficial potentials	0.815 (8.97)		
F_3. Joint teamwork		0.930	0.941
My hotel/restaurant and the supplier empower operation rights to the joint team	0.823 (12.1)		
The joint team conducts service designing and operational planning	0.834 (13.6)		
The joint team has common goals and team spirits	0.922 (14.7)		
The joint team carries out integrated operations and coordination	0.856 (13.9)		
The joint team is responsible for problem-solving in operations	0.858 (13.1)		
F_4. Relationship quality		0.922	0.929
My hotel/restaurant is confident in the current relationship with the supplier	0.836 (12.8)		
My hotel/restaurant is satisfactory to the current relationship with the supplier	0.814 (12.8)		
My hotel/restaurant is not willing to keep the current relationship with the supplier (R)	0.876 (13.8)		
My hotel/restaurant is commitment to the current relationship with the supplier	0.878 (13.9)		
My hotel/restaurant believes that the relationship is sustainable with the supplier	0.802 (12.2)		

Notes: All variables were measured using seven-point Likert scales by 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree"; R = items need to be reversely coded; α refers Cronbach's α value for construct internal consistency; and CR refers to composite reliability.

we synthesized five items measuring joint teamwork based on Ferguson et al. (2004), Narus and Anderson (1995) and Stock (2006). Finally, we developed five items to measure relationship quality with references to the existing studies such as Crosby et al. (1990), Jap et al. (1999), Fynes et al. (2004), and Farrelly and Quester (2005). Table 1 shows the constructs, measurement items retained after the measurement validation using confirmatory factor analysis, as well as the results of the reliability test.

3.3. Data collection

The testing of our research model requires data from knowledgeable respondents who are in charge of procurement, in-bound logistics and supply chains in hotels and restaurants (Campbell, 1955; Bagozzi et al., 1991; Kumar et al., 1993). Therefore, we collected survey data from these managerial executives. Initially, we randomly selected hotels and restaurants from industry directories in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and other cities, and invited them to participate in our study. Based on the positive responses from most of these selected hospitality firms, we carefully evaluated the firm background information and respondents to ensure the appropriate data for this study. Thereafter, we sent out 1000 copies of the questionnaires with stamped return envelops to the procurement managers of these hospitality firms. The questionnaire contained an explanatory guidance for answering the questions, stating that the respondent's firm was the focal organization in the interorganizational relations, and its main inbound logistics supplier was the business partner specified in the questionnaire. Seven-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree) was used for question items in the questionnaire. Finally, we collected 289 completed and useful questionnaires for data analysis.

3.4. Construct validity

Construct validity is defined as the extent to which the observable variables actually measure the theoretical constructs they are assumed to measure (Churchill, 1979). It verifies whether the

sample data can represent the true views of the population. We examined construct validity in terms of the convergent validity and discriminant validity using the AMOS software.

First, convergent validity is the extent to which a set of observable variables converges to the manifested construct with significantly high value of loadings. It examines whether the loading coefficient of an observable variable is significantly greater than twice of its standard error (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi et al., 1991) or the coefficient is greater than 0.50, ideally, 0.70 or higher, as well as whether the corresponding t-value is greater than 2.0 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 1, the analytical results of the observable variables are significantly loaded onto their respective manifested construct with high coefficient values. Therefore, the convergent validity of all constructs is justified.

Second, discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. A high degree of discriminant validity provides evidence that a unique construct can capture the propensity of the represented concept that other constructs cannot. We performed a rigorous assessment by comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) values of any two constructs (e.g., AVE_A and AVE_B for constructs A and B) with the square of the correlation coefficient between two constructs (C^2_{AB}). If the AVE values are greater than the squared correlation coefficient (AVE_A and $AVE_B > C^2_{AB}$), it provides a strong evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Bagozzi et al., 1991).

For the four constructs in our research model, we analyzed six pairs of discriminant validity. All χ^2 differences are significant, and AVE values of the constructs are greater than the squared correlation coefficients of the corresponding pairs. Therefore, these results justify the discriminant validity of the constructs. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and discriminant statistics of AVE values of the constructs.

4. Results

We performed the CFA to test the measurement model using the AMOS software. Fig. 2 depicts the measurement

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix.

Constructs/control variable	Mean	SD	Correlation matrix			
			F_1	F_2	F_3	F_4
F_1. Interorganizational trust	5.11	1.01	**0.885**			
F_2. Interdependence	4.92	1.02	0.534**	**0.854**		
F_3. Joint teamwork	4.34	1.31	0.363**	0.483**	**0.951**	
F_4. Relationship quality	4.89	1.10	0.586**	0.544**	0.456**	**0.921**
Control variable						
Work experience	4.01	1.22	−0.067	−0.026	−0.054	0.124
Years in the focal firm	2.97	1.21	−0.102	−0.123	−0.046	−0.075
Focal firm size	3.64	1.33	−0.024	−0.109	−0.021	−0.098
Years with the partner	3.76	1.23	0.027	−0.066	0.082	−0.041

AVE is reported on the diagonal for all constructs.
  ** $p < 0.01$.
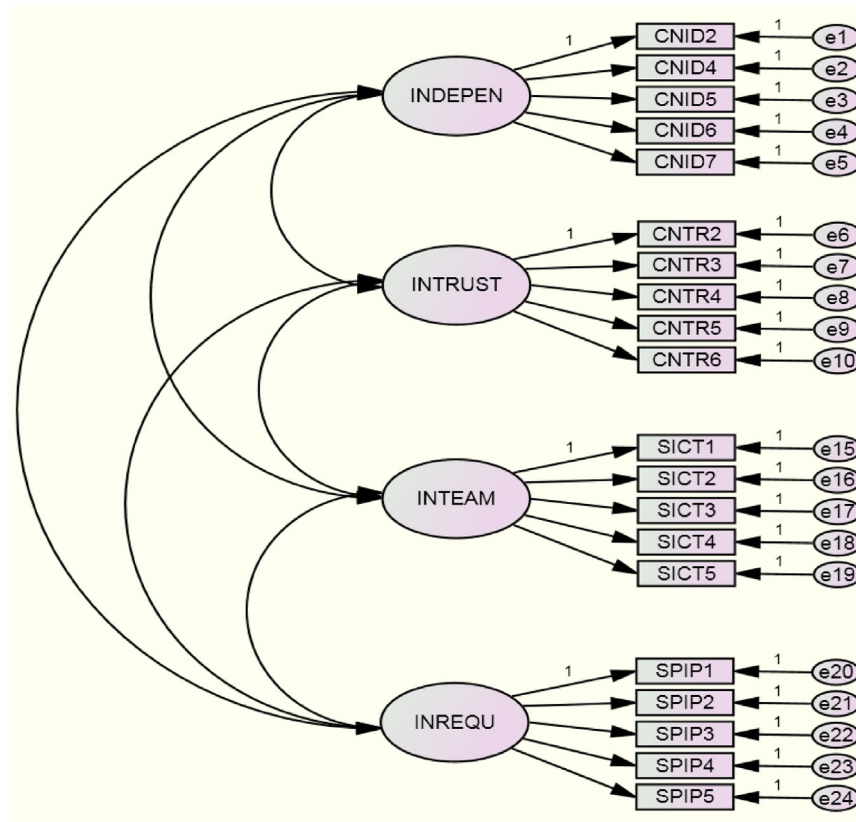
Fig. 2. The measurement model.

model. The outcomes of goodness of fit indices are: $\chi^2 = 298.34$, $df = 162$, $\chi^2/df = 1.84$, IFI = 0.946, CFI = 0.944, TLI = 0.933, GFI = 0.900, RMSEA = 0.056, and $p < 0.01$. All observable variables are sufficiently loaded (loadings > 0.50) to the underlying constructs respectively (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). These indices indicate that the measurement model significantly fits analytical criteria, and the unidimensionality of all constructs is confirmed.

We conducted structural analysis and hypothesis to examine the goodness of fit indices (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi et al., 1991). In particular, the structural equation modelling (SEM) and the maximum likelihood procedure in the AMOS were used to estimate the path coefficients of the model (Byrne, 2010), and examine the mediation effect of joint teamwork. Following the procedure of mediation analysis recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986), we deployed a competing model approach in SEM to examine the alternate models and strive for the best parsimonious model. As a result, we can identify whether joint teamwork completely or partially mediates the relationships between interorganizational dependence and trust on relationship quality (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Baron and Kenny, 1986). Table 3 shows the analytical procedures and outcomes.

We analyzed alternate models with SEM, and use χ^2 differences ($\Delta\chi^2$), p-value and other goodness of fit indices to assess the improvement of model fitness (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). The development of alternate models follows two principles. First, in light of the existing literature on likely cause–effect relationship and the procedure of mediation analysis, an alternate model can be created by changing the path (adding or deleting a path) in the prior model. Second, according to the conceptual underpinnings of the improvement suggestions from the analytical indices of the AMOS, we added or removed a path in the model to form an alternate model. Below are the results of three alternate models (M_0, M_1, and M_2).

Table 3
Summary of models, estimated coefficients, and fitness indices.

	M_0	M_1	M_2	M_3	M_4
Control variable					
Work experience	−0.057(0.712)	−0.028(0.388)	0.018(0.558)	−0.051(0.362)	−0.045(0.332)
Years in the focal firm	−0.032(0.233)	−0.103(0.115)	0.043(0.415)	−0.021(0.463)	−0.031(0.442)
Focal firm size	−0.014(0.678)	−0.115(10.53)	−0.015(0.563)	0.031(0.278)	−0.025(0.530)
Years with the partner	0.067(0.842)	0.084(0.135)	0.046(0.435)	0.107(0.113)	0.104(0.125)
Construct/path					
H1 (F1 → F3)	–	–	0.384**(3.56)	0.312**(3.10)	0.378**(3.44)
H2 (F2 → F3)	–	–	0.233*(2.98)	0.223*(2.78)	0.213*(2.45)
H3 (F3 → F4)	–	0.678**(4.67)	0.595**(6.06)	0.590**(5.96)	0.585**(5.82)
F1 → F2	–	–	0.465**(5.65)	–	–
F1 → F4	0.551**(4.40)	–	–	**0.122(1.85)**	–
F2 → F4	0.223*(2.08)	–	–	–	**0.119(1.78)**
Model fitness					
χ^2	329.38	410.75	297.74	297.74	297.74
df	163	164	161	161	161
χ^2/df	2.02	2.52	1.85	1.85	1.85
$\Delta\chi^2$	–	81.37	−31.64	0.00	0.00
	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$
CFI	0.933	0.900	0.945	0.934	0.933
TLI	0.922	0.884	0.936	0.925	0.922
IFI	0.934	0.901	0.946	0.931	0.930
GFI	0.886	0.867	0.897	0.887	0.885
NFI	0.910	0.886	0.929	0.916	0.913
RMSEA	0.068	0.084	0.058	0.059	0.059
Model	Acceptable	Acceptable	Best	Acceptable	Acceptable

Notes: $\Delta\chi^2 = (\chi_o^2 - \chi_i^2, i = 1, 2, 3, 4)$. The value in brackets is the *t*-value of a responding path coefficient. ns, not significant coefficient value; NFI, normed fit index; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; GFI, goodness-of-fit index; IFI, incremental fit index; RMSEA, root mean squared error of approximation.

* $p < 0.01$.
** $p < 0.05$.

First, we developed a model (M_0) in line with the analytical procedure of mediation effect (Baron and Kenny, 1986) to examine the direct effects of two exogenous constructs of interorganizational trust and interdependence on the endogenous construct of relationship quality through two paths (F_1 F_2, →F_4). The analytical results show that the effects of the two exogenous constructs on the endogenous construct are significant (coefficients: 0.554, $p < 0.01$ and 0.228, $p < 0.05$, respectively), and good model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.03$, CFI = 0.932, TLI = 0.923; IFI = 0.933; GFI = 0.885; NFI = 0.909; RMSEA = 0.068; $p < 0.01$), which indicate that M_0 passes the first step of mediation analysis.

Second, we produced a model (M_1) in accordance with the procedure of mediation analysis (Baron and Kenny, 1986), added a path from the construct of joint teamwork to the construct of relationship quality ($F_3 → F_4$), and examined the impact of joint teamwork (mediator construct) on relationship quality (endogenous construct). The analytical outcomes of model M_1 suggest that the effect of the mediator on the endogenous construct is significant (coefficient: 0.672, $p < 0.01$) and good model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.50$, CFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.885; IFI = 0.900; GFI = 0.868; RMSEA = 0.083; $p < .001$). These results indicate that M_1 passes the second step of mediation analysis.

Third, we followed the last step of the procedure of mediation analysis (Baron and Kenny, 1986) to examine the complete mediation of our research model (M_2), and test the hypotheses among all four constructs. The analytical outcomes of M_2 provide evidence of the goodness of fit of the model ($\chi^2 = 307.71$, $df = 162$, $\chi^2/df = 1.90$, CFI = 0.943, TLI = 0.934, IFI = 0.944, GFI = 0.895, RMSEA = 0.056, $p < 0.001$). The three path coefficients (0.382, 0.231, and 0.592, respectively) are significant ($p < 0.01$), which supports that three hypotheses are accepted. Importantly, these outcomes confirm that the construct of joint teamwork completely mediates the effect of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality. Thus, M_2 is a complete mediation model. In addition, we also find a significant covariance path between interorganizational trust and interdependence (coefficient: 0.462, $p < 0.01$).

Moreover, upon the confirmation of our research model and hypotheses, we examined alternate models, especially the partial mediation models (M_3 and M_4). As shown in Table 3, the analytical outcomes of these models indicate that the Chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi^2$) and two partial mediation paths are not significant, because the highlighted path coefficients and significances are: interorganizational trust ⇒ relationship quality, 0.124, *p*-value = 1.87; interdependence ⇒ relationship quality, 0.121, *p*-value = 1.73, although the fitness indices of M_3 and M_4 are acceptable (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi et al., 1991; Hair et al., 2010).

In sum, our empirical results in Table 3 confirm that M_2 is the best model with significant goodness of fit indices, and three hypotheses are supported by strong path coefficients and significant *p*-values. In addition, M_2 is a complete mediation model, and the construct of joint teamwork plays a full mediation role in relationship quality. Fig. 3 depicts the confirmed model with the complete mediation effect of joint teamwork on relationship quality.

5. Discussion

Our empirical results confirm that Hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported with statistical significance ($C_{F1→F3} = 0.382$, $p < 0.01$; $C_{F2→F3} = 0.231$, $p < 0.05$). As the important antecedents of interorganizational relationship, interorganizational trust and interdependence positively influence joint teamwork of the supply chain partners. At the same time, they are correlated with each other, because of the covariance coefficient = 0.462, $p < 0.01$. In particular, interorganizational trust has a stronger impact on the joint teamwork than interdependence does. This reflects the reality that interorganizational trust may be the sufficient determinant of interorganizational relationship, while interdependence may act as the necessary determinant to cornerstone the interorganizational cooperation between the hospitality firm and their suppliers (Fantazy et al., 2010; Murphy and Smith, 2009). Therefore, the effectiveness of joint teamwork deeply relies on the mutual trust
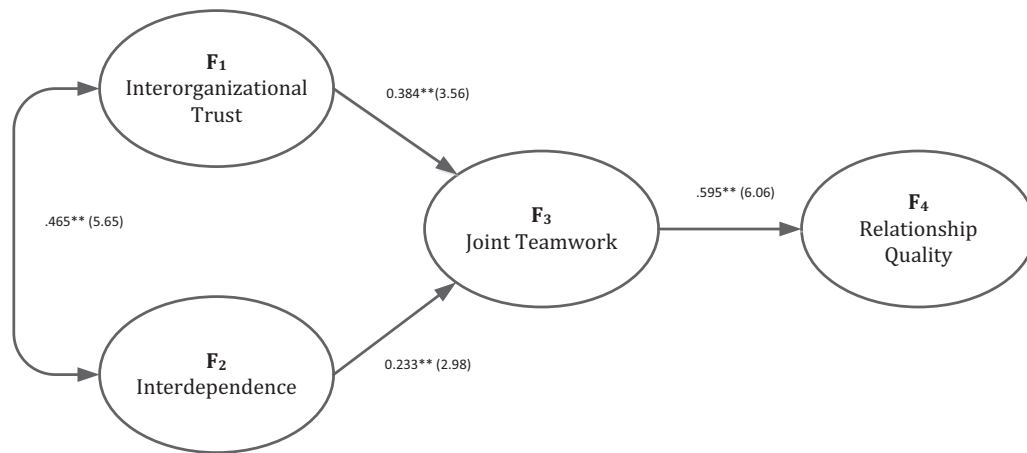
Note: For the purpose of clarity, control variables are not shown in the above Figure.

Fig. 3. The complete mediation effect of joint teamwork on relationship quality.

between hospitality firms and their suppliers, especially, the joint team members from the bilateral organizations.

In addition, Hypothesis 3 is supported with significant statistics ($C_{F3 \to F4} = 0.592$, $p < 0.01$), while partial mediation models (M_3 and M_4) are rejected. The acceptance of Hypothesis 3 justifies that joint teamwork plays a mediation role in leveraging the influences of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality. The rejection of partial mediation models proves that joint teamwork has a complete mediation effect, because the rejection excludes the possibility of partial mediation. Overall, these analytical findings confirm that the mediation model has a parsimonious structure together with validated constructs. The findings also prove the causality relationships among the constructs in the model. Moreover, the measurements of observable variables associated with each of the constructs have strong reliability and validity. In particular, the complete mediation effect of joint teamwork enriches the significance of our contributions.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study extends the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory to explore the interorganizational relationship between hospitality firms and their suppliers. It examines the impacts of interorganizational trust and interdependence on joint teamwork, as well as the mediation effect of the teamwork on relationship quality. The empirical results support the theoretical extension of our work, and justify that both the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory are the theoretical underpinnings of interorganizational relationship (Smith and Xiao, 2008; Song, 2011). Specifically, the joint teamwork leverages the influence of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality in the context of hospitality supply chains. In other words, if the teamwork functions effectively, the relational resources can be transformed relationship quality in terms of satisfactory, committed, and long-term oriented interorganizational relationship (Narus and Anderson, 1995; Stock, 2006).

More importantly, our study confirms the *complete* mediation effect of joint teamwork. Such effect enriches extant knowledge of interorganizational relationship and reveals that interorganizational trust and interdependence may not directly enhance the goodness of interorganizational relationship. Instead, joint teamwork effectively facilitates the achievement of relationship quality in service supply chains (Ganesan, 1994; Ferguson et al., 2004;

Mentzer et al., 2000). Therefore, these hospitality firms and their suppliers can benefit from the effective performance of their joint teamwork.

In addition, the present work sustains prior academic inquiry of interorganizational relationship in hospitality management, and explores the relationship from the perspective of vertical operational integration. It empirically examines the cooperation mechanism and management practice of interorganizational relationship in hospitality service supply chains, and reveals the pivot role of joint teamwork in management of interorganizational relationship (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003; Fantazy et al., 2010; Kim and Cha, 2002). Our findings can inspire the future research on interorganizational relationship in horizontal operational integration with organizations, such as travel agencies and airlines. It should be useful to investigate how interorganizational trust and interdependence influence business cooperation and relationship quality among these organizations, and whether joint teamwork plays the same role as in the vertical operational integration of hospitality supply chains.

Finally, we use relationship quality as the endogenous construct in this study to evaluate the goodness of interorganizational relationship in hotel supply chains (Crosby et al., 1990; Kim and Cha, 2002). The findings empirically confirm the reliability and validity of the construct and its manifested observable variables. Therefore, our work expands the domain of interorganizational relationship with concepts of quality management, the joint team members may participate in the quality assurance process of supply chain relationship. This expansion can contribute to the development of a promising research to explore the influence of quality management on interorganizational relationship.

5.2. Managerial implications

The empirical findings are of great value to hotel and restaurant procurement managers and hospitality firms. First, the formation of the joint teamwork is of ultimate importance to the relationships between hotels, restaurants, and their suppliers. These hospitality firms should focus on the selection of appropriate staff to serve as the joint team members, empower the team members with decision-making responsibility, and motivate them to work effectively on behalf of bilaterally organizational interests. The members should possess professional knowledge of interorganizational business operations, communication, problem-solving, and conflict-handling skills. They should also have competent

negotiation and coordination capabilities to deal with complicated situations.

Second, interorganizational trust is the foundation of interorganizational cooperation. The trust is difficult to build, because it is the cumulative outcomes of the past positive experience and the beneficial expectation of the future cooperation. However, the trust is easy to be damaged by careless actions. Therefore, hospitality firms and their suppliers should carefully handle subtle and sensitive issues, and resolve any problems with regard to their cooperation. The partners should control the intention of opportunistic behaviours such as cheating and taking advantages of their counterparts, and eliminate any suspicious motions (Brown et al., 2000). Specifically, as the delegates of supply chain partners, joint team members are responsible for the development of interorganizational trust between the bilateral organizations, they should cultivate harmonious atmosphere, behave consistently, and work in light of professional code of conduct.

Third, although interdependence is the reality in economic exchange, the hospitality firms have freedom to select their supplies in a market economy. Therefore, the procurement managers of the hospitality firms should recognize the interdependence between their own firms and their suppliers, and understand that the successful relationship of service supply chains does not fully rely on their partners. Instead, the hospitality firms should focus on development of core services and values to strengthen their goodwill, corporate image and market share. When a hospitality firm has these invaluable assets, suppliers are more willing to develop the supply chain relationships with the firm. In such a circumstance, the procurement managers in the firm would have the greater bargain power in selecting reliable suppliers for providing high-quality culinary materials and in-bound logistics services.

Finally, our study may inspire the procurement managers in the hospitality firms to invest in interorganizational trust for developing and maintaining supply chains with their counterparts (Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Zaheer and Venkatraman, 1995). There is little doubt that legal contracts are essential to safeguard organizational rights and properties in cooperation. However, when the contracts are effectively in force, there may have some problems in the cooperation. The resolution of the problems through legal actions may seriously damage the on-going interorganizational relationship. In order to minimize the damage and continue their cooperation, it should be more effective to resolve the problems peacefully through joint teamwork based on interorganizational trust.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory, we empirically examine the antecedents and consequences of interorganizational relationship in the context of hotel and restaurant supply chain operations. Our findings confirm that interorganizational trust and interdependence are of ultimate importance in determining the relationship quality of interorganizational relationship. Especially, we find that interorganizational joint teamwork plays the pivot role in leveraging the influences of interorganizational trust and interdependence on relationship quality of service supply chains. Our work contributes to knowledge, because it extends the social exchange theory and the resource dependence theory into tourism context, and enriches the literature of interorganizational relationship with regard to the management of hospitality supply chains. In addition, our work makes contributions to practice, because the findings have managerial insights for developing and strengthening interorganizational cooperation. In line with these findings, we would like to offer suggestions for future research as follows.

Further research can be carried out to extend our model and explore horizontally operational integration with other business partners in service supply chains. It can examine the role of joint teamwork associated with supply chain operations in other hospitality organizations. In addition, future research can incorporate the construct of information sharing in the research model to examine the effect of information sharing on joint teamwork, and find out whether the teamwork can leverage the effects of information sharing, interorganizational trust, and interdependence on relationship quality of service supply chains. Furthermore, environmental uncertainty and competition pressure may moderate the contribution of joint teamwork. Therefore, it is beneficial to examine the effects of environmental uncertainty and competition pressure in dynamic environments and provide insights for hospitality organizations to cope with environmental influences on supply chain operations.

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