



Franchisees' trust in and satisfaction with franchise partnerships[☆]



Levent Altınay^{a,*}, Maureen Brookes^a, Melih Madanoğlu^b, Gurhan Aktas^c

^a Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus, Oxford OX3 0BP, UK

^b Florida Atlantic University, 777, Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA

^c Dokuz Eylül University, Kültür Mh. Cumhuriyet Blv, No: 144, 35210 Konak, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to establish the relationship between the antecedents of trust, trust itself, and franchisee satisfaction. Taking its cue from power-dependence, international business, and social exchange theories, the paper contributes to the franchise literature by offering a more comprehensive theoretical perspective to aid understanding of trust development in and satisfaction with franchise partnerships. Drawing on a multi-sector survey of Turkish franchisees, the study provides empirical evidence of the impact of the franchisors' role performance and cultural sensitivity on franchisees' trust in and satisfaction with franchise partnerships. Furthermore, this research demonstrates the central role of communication in the development of franchisees' trust.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs frequently choose franchising as a distribution channel (Watson & Johnson, 2010) as this business model offers potential benefits for both franchisors and franchisees (Monroy & Alzola, 2005). Nevertheless, franchise partners must manage the tensions inherent in franchising in order to obtain these benefits. While franchisors seek to maintain uniformity and strict adherence to operational standards to preserve brand integrity, franchisees often desire greater autonomy to operate their franchised unit as they see fit (Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). Researchers therefore recognize the need to create supportive or cooperative environments in order to manage these tensions (Altınay & Brookes, 2012).

Frazer, Merrilees, and Wright (2007) argue that promoting a cooperative environment requires managing the power and control in franchise relationships. While previous studies reveal that franchisors use both threat and sanctions (coercive power), and persuasion (non-coercive power) (Paik & Choi, 2007), researchers are currently focusing attention on the latter and on the role of trust as a complementary form of control.

Davies, Lassar, Manolis, Prince, and Winsor (2011) argue that trust enhances franchisees' confidence in the franchisor's competence and integrity, leading to more cooperative behavior and satisfaction with franchise partnerships. Previous research also identifies role performance (the abilities, capabilities and investment of franchisors to perform their roles), cultural sensitivity, and communication as antecedents of trust and relationship development (Harmon & Griffiths, 2008). Scholars remain in the dark, however, regarding the existence of a relationship between these antecedents, or a relationship between these antecedents, trust, and franchisee satisfaction. This paper therefore aims to establish the relationship between the antecedents of trust, trust itself, and franchisee satisfaction from the perspective of a sample of Turkish franchisees. In doing so, this study responds to calls for research on franchise relationship development and satisfaction (Dada & Watson, in press; Davies et al., 2011), from franchisees' perspectives (Grace & Weaven, 2011), and in diverse country markets (Doherty, 2009).

This study makes two distinct contributions to the franchising literature. First, the application of power-dependence, international business, and social exchange theories to explain that the influence of antecedents on franchisees' perceived trust in and satisfaction with the franchise partnership is an innovation in this field. Second, the study empirically identifies the impact of the franchisor's role performance and cultural sensitivity on trust, and the central role of communication in the development of franchisees' trust in and satisfaction with the franchisor. Consequently, this research advances the understanding of trust in franchising by demonstrating that franchisees' trust in and satisfaction with franchise partnerships depend on the

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: laltinay@brookes.ac.uk (L. Altınay), meabrookes@brookes.ac.uk (M. Brookes), melih.madanoglu@fau.edu (M. Madanoğlu), gurhan.aktas@deu.edu.tr (G. Aktas).

franchisors' role performance, cultural sensitivity and effective communication with franchisees.

The paper briefly reviews the development of trust from each of the three research streams and examines the antecedents of trust in franchising to develop the research hypotheses. The subsequent sections then explain the research design before presenting the results. The conclusions highlight the contributions of the study to franchise research.

2. Trust and power-dependence, international business and social exchange theories

Researchers frequently conceptualize trust using two dimensions: benevolence and credibility. Benevolence reflects the belief that one party will act in the interests of the other (Anderson & Narus, 1990), whereas credibility is the belief that a partner will be competent and reliable in fulfilling his obligations (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This conceptualization of trust suggests an additional distinction between intentionality and capability. Intentionality incorporates motives and concerns towards a partner's needs and sensitivities (Ganesan, 1994). Capability, meanwhile, refers to professionalism, competence and expertise in the execution of business transactions (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998). Researchers explain distribution channel relationships and the development of trust from three different theoretical perspectives: power dependency, international business, and social exchange.

Power dependency theorists advocate analyzing relationships according to the use and dependence on power between partners, and the resources they bring to the relationship (Berthon, Pitt, Ewing, & Bakkeland, 2003). When one partner performs his role effectively, the other becomes more dependent on the relationship, as the opportunity costs of finding an alternative increase (Kim, 2000). At the same time, however, effective role performance also influences the development of trust (Stern & El-Ansary, 1992).

International business theorists claim that cultural differences between partners are what affect relationships (Lorange & Roos, 1993). Partners must proactively manage cultural differences; demonstrate an awareness of and sensitivity to language, business practice, and political and legal differences (Boyacigiller, 1990); and adapt accordingly to local market conditions (Batonda & Perry, 2003). Cultural sensitivity, in turn, enhances the development of relationship trust (LaBahn & Harich, 1997).

Social exchange theorists explain channel governance through the relationships that evolve between partners (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Partners demonstrate their commitment to relationships through their social investment in interaction and communication (Emerson, 1981). Researchers recognize the special importance of communication, which facilitates the transfer of knowledge (Voss, Johnson, Cullen, Sakano, & Takenouchi, 2006). The intensity and the reciprocity of exchanges contribute to the development of trust in these relationships (Doney et al., 1998). Table 1 summarizes the key differences between these theories and trust development methods.

In franchise partnerships, trust enhances franchisee compliance to operational standards and thus uniformity across the franchise network

(Davies et al., 2011). As such, trust has a positive impact on the long-term viability of the franchise partnership by minimizing the possibilities for conflict (Altinay & Brookes, 2012). These three different theoretical perspectives are therefore all potentially relevant to franchise relationships and are the basis for the development of the hypotheses that follow.

3. Development of the hypotheses

3.1. Role performance and trust

Franchisees join a franchise network for the training, operational and marketing support they receive (Monroy & Alzola, 2005), and franchisees are dependent on franchisors for these resources. Franchisor performance in providing these resources impacts on the franchisees' confidence and trust in the franchisor (Altinay & Brookes, 2012). Hence, in the presence of superior franchisor role performance, trust is likely to develop at the franchisee level (Harmon & Griffiths, 2008), which provides the basis for the first hypothesis.

H1. *The level of a franchiser's role performance relates positively to the level of trust in the franchisee–franchisor relationship.*

3.2. Cultural sensitivity and trust

Franchise researchers recognize the importance of franchisors demonstrating sensitivity to a franchisee's culture (Sashi & Karuppur, 2002). Doherty (2009) asserts that cultural sensitivity facilitates the recognition of goodwill and good intentions, and thus relationship development. Franchisors demonstrate this sensitivity through the commitment of resources to local markets, and the adaptation of products and practices to suit local conditions (Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). Although franchisors face a challenging task in bridging market differences (Wang & Altinay, 2008), they demonstrate their cultural awareness and foster the development of trust when they do (Altinay, 2006; Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). Davies et al. (2011) specifically underline the difficulty of developing a franchisee's trust without the franchisor's appreciation of and adjustment to the franchisee's business culture. The extent to which franchisors consider local market conditions is therefore the basis of the second hypothesis.

H2. *The level of a franchiser's cultural sensitivity relates positively to the level of trust in the franchisee–franchisor relationship.*

3.3. Mediating role of communication

Previous franchise studies find that communication contributes to the development of trust (Doherty & Alexander, 2004) and relational quality (Brookes & Roper, 2011). Altinay and Brookes (2012) report that franchise partners exchange information about each other's competences, experience, and expertise through communication. As such, franchise partners demonstrate their benevolent intentions through

Table 1
Theoretical perspectives on trust development.

Theory	Relationships viewed through	Relationships formed through	Trust developed through	Indicative authors
Power dependency	Dependency and use of power	Dependence on resources of partner; opportunity cost of finding alternative	Role performance: carrying out responsibilities effectively	Berthon et al. (2003); Kim (2000); Stern & El-Ansary (1992)
International business	Sensitivity to and management of cultural differences	Proactivity in managing cultural differences (language, business practices, political and legal systems)	Partner demonstrating understanding of and adaptation to local market conditions	Batonda & Perry (2003); LaBahn & Harich (1997); Boyacigiller (1990); Lorange & Roos (1993)
Social exchange	Social investments by partners	Social exchanges (interactions and communication) between partners, which evolve over time	Intensity and reciprocity of exchanges that demonstrate commitment; the transfer of knowledge between partners is important	Anderson & Narus (1990); Doney et al. (1998); Emerson (1981); Voss et al. (2006)

communication (Doherty & Alexander, 2004). In particular, franchise partners demonstrate their cultural sensitivity to each other through communicating their cultural awareness and willingness to adapt their practices to the local market conditions (Clarkin & Swavely, 2006; Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). These arguments lead to the third and fourth hypotheses.

H3. Communication mediates the relationship between role performance and trust.

H4. Communication mediates the relationship between cultural sensitivity and trust.

3.4. Trust and satisfaction

Davies et al. (2011) define franchisee satisfaction as the positive perception of franchisors meeting or exceeding their economic and psychological expectations from the franchise working relationship (Davies et al., 2011). Franchisees derive satisfaction on the basis of how well franchisors meet their expectations. The trust between franchisors and franchisees is a key factor that shapes these expectations (Hing, 1995). Trust is also an important contributor to franchisees' overall satisfaction with the franchise network (Chiou, Hsieh, & Yang, 2004). This argument gives rise to the fifth and final hypothesis.

H5. A franchisee's trust in a franchisor will positively affect the franchisee's overall satisfaction with the franchise system.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

This study employs stratified random sampling of members of the Turkish Franchise Association (UFRAD) in Izmir, Turkey. To have a balanced sample, the survey design ensures that at least 40% of participating franchisees belong to an international franchisor. Personal visits to franchisees to administer the survey instrument between October 2011 and February 2012 ensure a high-quality data collection process. Data collection was ongoing until fulfilling the participation quota of 200 multi-sector franchisees, giving a final response rate of 45%.

4.2. Measures

A self-administered questionnaire forms the basis for data collection, adapting and modifying measures from previous studies to suit the purpose and particular context of this study. The result is a seven-point scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. This study consists of five operational constructs. To measure role performance (ROLEPERF), the study uses seven of the eight statements related to operations and training assistance (Chiou et al., 2004). The eighth item (on accounting matters) is redundant due to the advancement of technology and low face validity. Cultural sensitivity (SENS) derives from four adapted items from the study of LaBahn and Harich (1997). The communication (COMM) construct consists of six variables (Chiou et al., 2004). Five items in the context of franchising (Chiou et al., 2004) form the basis for the measurement of Trust (TRUST). Three further items (Chiou et al., 2004) represent overall satisfaction (SATISF). The comparison of psychometric properties of scales between this study and original studies shows that Cronbach's alpha is either equal to or exceeds the measures in original studies (see Table 2).

The study controls for the effect of country of origin of the franchisor on communication and trust. Measurement of country of origin (ORIGIN) relies on a dichotomous variable (0 = Domestic and 1 = Foreign). Table 3 shows that the Textiles, Food, and Entertainment industries together account for more than 47% of the franchisee sample. More than 40% of franchisees have been in a franchise chain for three years or less.

Table 2
Comparison of psychometric properties of scales in this study vs. original studies.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha This study	Cronbach's alpha Original studies	Source
ROLEPERF ^a	0.82	0.78	Chiou et al. (2004)
SENS ^b	0.85	0.85	LaBahn and Harich (1997)
COMM	0.83	0.81	Chiou et al. (2004)
TRUST	0.88	0.85	Chiou et al. (2004)
SATISF	0.94	0.92	Chiou et al. (2004)

^a ROLEPERF encompasses two constructs: Assistance Satisfaction: Operational Guidelines (0.74) and Assistance Satisfaction: Training 0.82 in Chiou et al. (2004); the table reports the average reliability of these two values.

^b SENS consists of three values in LaBahn and Harich (1997): US manufacturers = 0.80; Mexican manufacturers = 0.86; and Mexican distributors = 0.89. The table reports the average reliability of these three groups.

4.3. Data analysis

This study's methodology first uses a measurement model to confirm the factor structure of the five latent variables. Next, a structural equation model tests the relationships between latent variables (see Fig. 1). This study uses a strictly confirmatory approach (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) to formulate a single model and yield the empirical data to test the model. Preliminary analysis shows that data departs from normality. Therefore, the methodology employs maximum likelihood with the Satorra–Bentler correction (Satorra & Bentler, 1994) to estimate chi-square and other measures. The Mplus 6.1 statistical program provides the means to carry out the data analysis.

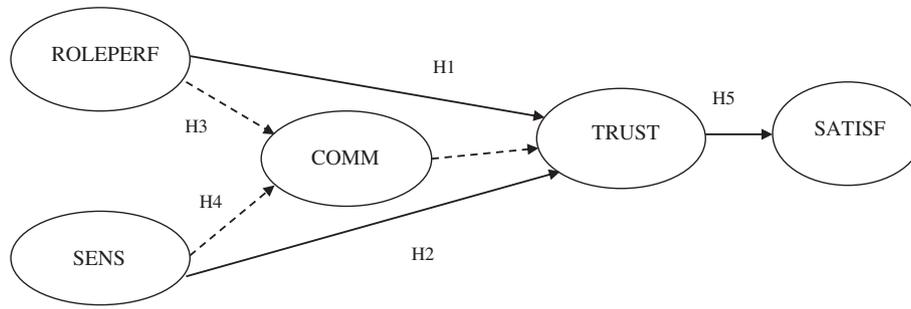
5. Findings

5.1. Measurement model

The first step in this analysis involves the assessment of internal consistency, composite reliability, and validity of manifest variables representing the five constructs. Cronbach's alpha for five constructs ranges between 0.82 and 0.94. This result shows that all five scales have an acceptable internal consistency on the basis of the 0.70 threshold value of Nunnally (1978) (Table 4). Table 4 also indicates that all

Table 3
Sample characteristics.

Category	Count	%
<i>Industry</i>		
Textiles	43	21.5
Information & Communications technology	19	9.5
Household appliances	18	9
Food and entertainment	52	26
Jewelry and accessories	16	8
Real estate	16	8
Furniture and decoration	16	8
Other	20	10
Total	200	100
<i>Years in chain</i>		
Less than 1 year	21	10.5
1 to 3 years	64	32
4 to 5 years	37	18.5
6 to 8 years	34	17
9 years or more	44	22
Total	200	100
<i>Franchisor origin</i>		
Domestic	118	59
Foreign	82	41
Total	200	100



Notes: ROLEPERF=Role Performance, SENS=Cultural Sensitivity, COMM=Communication, TRUST=Trust, SATISF=Overall Satisfaction. Dashed lines denote mediation hypotheses.

Fig. 1. Conceptual model. Notes: ROLEPERF = Role performance, SENS = Cultural sensitivity, COMM = Communication, TRUST = Trust, SATISF = Overall satisfaction. Dashed lines denote mediation hypotheses.

factors have a composite reliability of at least 0.80, which is higher than the threshold value of 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The tests of convergent validity and discriminant validity verify construct validity. The t value of each indicator and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) denote convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 4 shows that all indicator loadings have significant t values ($p \leq .01$). In addition, AVE values for all constructs exceed 0.50 (i.e., ROLEPERF = 0.51, SENS = 0.64, COMM = 0.57, TRUST = 0.67, and SATISF = 0.86) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, these results establish convergent validity for the measurement model.

Table 4
Measurement scale properties (N = 200).

Indicator	Standardized loadings	Error variance	t-Value	p Value	Alpha	CR	AVE
ROLEPERF							
X1	0.31	0.90	4.75	0.00	0.82	0.82	0.51
X2	0.42	0.81	7.09	0.00			
X3	0.39	0.84	6.23	0.00			
X4	0.47	0.74	5.71	0.00			
X5	0.51	0.73	9.35	0.00			
X6	0.95	0.10	75.28	0.00			
X7	0.93	0.13	68.64	0.00			
X8	0.58	0.67	11.40	0.00			
SENS							
X1	0.74	0.44	19.39	0.00	0.85	0.84	0.64
X2	0.88	0.21	31.70	0.00			
X3	0.76	0.42	19.69	0.00			
X4	0.67	0.67	15.04	0.00			
X3							
COMM							
X1	0.52	0.73	9.14	0.00	0.83	0.89	0.57
X2	0.46	0.78	7.55	0.00			
X3	0.58	0.66	11.09	0.00			
X4	0.86	0.25	35.50	0.00			
X5	0.83	0.30	28.98	0.00			
Xsample6	0.80	0.36	24.23	0.00			
TRUST							
X1	0.81	0.34	24.85	0.00	0.88	0.89	0.67
X2	0.86	0.25	32.52	0.00			
X3	0.70	0.50	17.20	0.00			
X4	0.68	0.54	15.01	0.00			
X5	0.85	0.28	31.91	0.00			
SATISF							
X1	0.94	0.13	77.36	0.00	0.94	0.94	0.86
X2	0.94	0.12	80.45	0.00			
X3	0.89	0.22	49.41	0.00			

Notes: Alpha = Cronbach's alpha, CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted; ROLEPERF = Role performance, SENS = Cultural sensitivity, COMM = Communication, TRUST = Trust, SATISF = Overall satisfaction.

Discriminant validity is in evidence when observed indicators that measure one construct do not relate to the measures of other constructs in the measurement model (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010). A test of discriminant validity works by constraining the correlation parameter between the constructs at 1.0 and then observing the chi-square difference values for the unconstrained and constrained models. Results show that the Satorra-Bentler corrected chi-square value for the unconstrained model ($\chi^2 = 349.84.56$, $df = 245$) is lower than that of the constrained model ($\chi^2 = 3117.19$, $df = 276$). The significant chi-square value difference ($p \leq .01$) between the two models denotes discriminant validity for the measurement model.

The first assessment of the measurement model is the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio. Findings show that the value of this ratio (1.42) is lower than Kline's (2004) threshold value of 3 (See Table 5). Incremental goodness-of-fit indices – the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) – are other indices to consider. Table 5 demonstrates that the TLI has a value of 0.95, which means that the proposed measurement model has a good fit to the data (Bentler, 1992). The CFI value of the present measurement model (0.96) denotes a good fit, too (Bentler, 1992). The methodology also calls for examining residual measures of the model. The first residual measure, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), has a value of 0.05, which is indicative of a model with a good fit (Byrne, 1998). The other residual measure, the root means error of approximation (RMSEA), has a value of 0.05, which is satisfactory (Hair, William, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

5.2. Structural model

The structural model investigates the relationship between direct and indirect effects of two exogenous latent variables (ROLEPERF and SENS) on TRUST. COMM mediates the relationship between exogenous constructs and the endogenous outcome construct (TRUST). The evaluation of fit indices reveal that the model achieves a good fit (χ^2 to $df = 1.23$ CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05) (See Table 5). Fig. 2 shows that all paths that the hypotheses posit have positive and significant coefficients. The relationship between ROLEPERF and TRUST is significant after controlling for ORIGIN. The coefficient is also positive, which offers support for H1 (See Table 5). The analysis also reveals the existence of a positive significant relationship ($\beta = 0.14$, $t = 2.26$) between SENS and TRUST after controlling for ORIGIN, which is consistent with H2. The significant coefficient for the direct effect of COMM on TRUST is of particular note ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 9.87$). In addition, both ROLEPERF and SENS have significant positive effects on COMM. Jointly, ROLEPERF, SENS, and ORIGIN explain 37% of the variance in COMM (see Fig. 2).

The mediation analysis in this study works to the specifications of Baron and Kenny (1986). That is, full-mediation is present when the

Table 5
Structural equation results and mediation analysis.

Measurement model fit				
Satorra–Bentler corrected $\chi^2 = 349.84$ (df 245) $p \leq .01$				
χ^2 to Df = 1.42				
CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05				
Structural model fit				
Satorra–Bentler corrected $\chi^2 = 389.10$ (df 315) $p \leq .01$				
χ^2 to Df = 1.23				
CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05				
Hypothesized path	Direct effect	Indirect effect (through COMM)	Total effect	Supported
H1: ROLEPERF → TRUST	0.20 (3.31)**	–	–	YES
H2: SENS → TRUST	0.14 (2.26)*	–	–	YES
H3: ROLEPERF → COMM → TRUST	–	0.24 (4.77)**	0.44 (6.96)**	YES
H4: SENS → COMM → TRUST	–	0.21 (4.28)**	0.35 (5.37)**	YES
H5: TRUST → SATISF	0.89 (11.88)**	–	–	YES

Notes: t-Values appear in parentheses; ROLEPERF = Role performance, SENS = Cultural sensitivity, COMM = Communication, TRUST = Trust.

* $p \leq .05$.

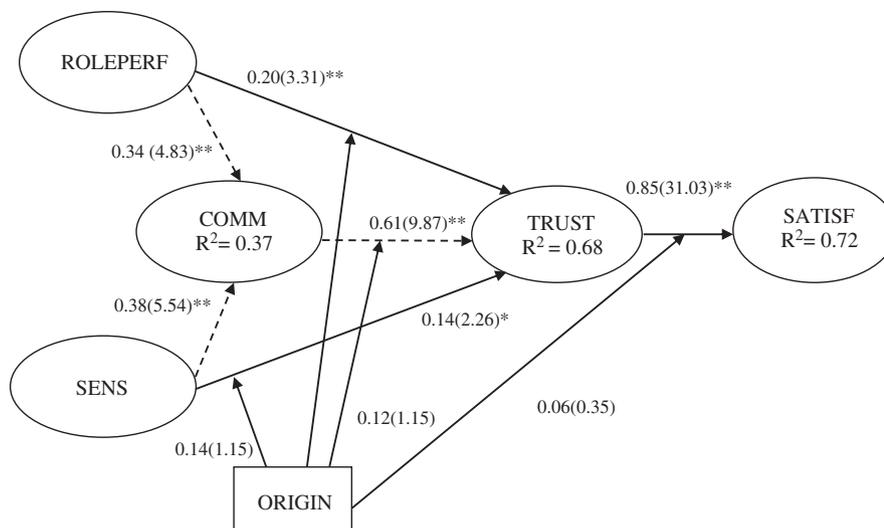
** $p \leq .01$.

inclusion of a mediating variable renders the relationship between the predictor and dependent variable insignificant. When both the direct and indirect effects are significant, however, a partial (Baron & Kenny, 1986) or complementary (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010) mediation situation results. In the present study, the first mediation analysis (H3) indicates that the total effect of ROLEPERF on TRUST is 0.44 ($t = 6.96$, $p \leq .01$). A further investigation demonstrates that the indirect effect through COMM is not only significant (0.24, $t = 4.77$) but also accounts for more than half of the total effect of ROLEPERF on TRUST (See Table 5). This finding lends support to H3 and leads to the conclusion that partial (Baron & Kenny, 1986) or complementary (Zhao et al., 2010) mediation is at work. The second mediation hypothesis (H4) reveals that the total effect of SENS on TRUST is 0.35 ($t = 5.37$, $p \leq .01$). Further analysis shows that COMM partially mediates the association between SENS and TRUST ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.28$), which supports H4. As in the previous hypothesis, the indirect effect of SENS on TRUST through COMM is larger than the direct effect of SENS on TRUST. Direct and indirect effects of ROLEPERF and SENS account for 68% of the variance in TRUST.

Lastly, H5 posits a positive relationship between TRUST and SATISF. Findings indicate that TRUST has a significant positive relationship with SATISF ($\beta = 0.85$, $t = 31.03$) and explains 72% of the variance in overall satisfaction.

6. Discussion

This study demonstrates a positive relationship between role performance and trust, a finding consistent with those of Altinay and Brookes (2012), and Harmon and Griffiths (2008). This finding suggests that franchisors should perform their partnership roles effectively through the provision of training and operation support, to gain franchisees' confidence in their capabilities. A positive relationship also emerges between cultural sensitivity and trust, confirming previous findings (Altinay, 2006; Doherty, 2009; Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). Franchisees' perceptions of a franchisor's cultural awareness and sensitivity lead to the development of franchisees' trust. Given the cultural differences between home and host markets, franchisors should be adaptable to the host market conditions in their attempts to gain franchisees' trust.



Notes: ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; t-values appear in parentheses; ROLEPERF=Role Performance, SENS=Cultural Sensitivity, COMM=Communication, TRUST=Trust, SATISF=Overall Satisfaction. Dashed lines denote mediation hypotheses.

Fig. 2. Path coefficients for the model. Notes: ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; t-values appear in parentheses; ROLEPERF = Role performance, SENS = Cultural sensitivity, COMM = Communication, TRUST = Trust, SATISF = Overall satisfaction. Dashed lines denote mediation hypotheses.

The study also demonstrates the role of communication as a mediator of both role performance and cultural sensitivity to trust. More importantly, communication also accounts for more than half of the indirect effect of each predictor on trust. While confirming the findings of previous research (Altinay & Brookes, 2012; Clarkin & Swavely, 2006; Doherty & Alexander, 2004), this study builds on the existing research and provides empirical evidence that communication helps to strengthen the relationship between the cultural sensitivity of the franchisor and the franchisees' trust. Furthermore, these findings make a novel contribution to the literature by suggesting that, while role performance does have a positive influence on building trust in the franchisor, the communication between the two parties is what augments the effect of role performance on trust.

Additionally, the study provides empirical evidence of the significant and positive impact of trust on the satisfaction of franchisees, a finding consistent with that of Chiou et al. (2004). When franchisees develop trust in the franchisor on the basis of their role performance and cultural sensitivity, franchisees are likely to express satisfaction with franchising. This satisfaction, in turn, is likely to reduce conflict between franchisors and franchisees, and lead to the upholding of long-term relationships.

Accordingly, this study yields a number of implications for both franchisors and franchisees. Franchisors should endeavor to commit resources to continuous improvement of training and operations support for franchisees. They should also maintain a flexible approach to local markets in order to accommodate cultural differences. Open and transparent communication at the pre and post stages of the partnership is important to facilitate learning between franchisors and franchisees, offer franchisees a clear sense of direction, enhance relationships, and prevent conflict. Additionally, franchisor members who communicate directly with franchisees should have the appropriate skills and attitudes to demonstrate their cultural sensitivity towards franchisees. Prospective franchisees should thoroughly investigate communication channels and levels of pre- and post-opening support from franchisors. They should also seek evidence of the franchisor's willingness to adapt, given the impact that these approaches have on their satisfaction.

7. Conclusions

This study draws upon power-dependence, international business and social exchange theories to develop and empirically test a model of the influence of different antecedents of trust (role performance, cultural sensitivity, and communication) on franchisees' trust in and satisfaction with franchise partnerships. Using data from a sample of Turkish franchisees, this paper offers the first empirical evidence of the joint influence of these three antecedents on franchisees' perceptions of trust in franchise partnerships. The development of trust is dependent on franchisors' ability to perform their partnership roles, demonstrate cultural sensitivity and communicate with franchisees effectively. In addition, this study offers unique insights into the importance of communication as a non-coercive source of power in the development of franchisees' trust. Furthermore, the analysis herein demonstrates, more specifically, how communication augments the effects of both role performance and cultural sensitivity on this trust.

As with all research, this study is not without limitations. Hopefully, however, the limitations of this study will give rise to future inquiry. First, the empirical findings of this study come from a single country context. Future studies could test the model in other country settings. Second, despite confirming several important relationships from extant theories to do with trust, this study does not address the complexity and the multidimensional nature of trust. Therefore, future studies could test a model whereby trust is a second-order abstraction of its underlying dimensions.

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