



**Kaunas University of Technology**  
School of Economics and Business

**The Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in  
International Business**  
Master's Final Degree Project

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**Kaunas, 2024**



**Kaunas University of Technology**  
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International Business (6211LX029)

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**Kaunas, 2024**



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School of Economics and Business

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## **The Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business**

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Study field and area (study field group): Business, Business and Public Management.

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### Summary

**Research relevance.** Given globalization and interdependent markets, trust plays an increasingly pivotal role in international business transactions. Attracting international partnerships requires trust to facilitate smooth and productive international collaborations. With so much happening globally today and digital disruption impacting every aspect of business life, trust plays an increasingly significant role. As global economies become more interdependent, understanding and building trust within international business partnerships are integral for long-term sustainable growth and competitive edge (Madhok 2017). Thesis analysis deep layers of trust, exploring all factors which contributes to its formation and continuity. Evaluating challenges which comes from communication barriers as well as major global market changes. There is a gap of research about the how being ethical and focusing on sustainability can lead the influence on trust (Gao & Duysters, 2019). Focusing on this gap, possible communication features analysis must be done to understand the impact on fostering trust within international business. By studying the role of trust in international business, this thesis shows knowledge of communication features for fostering trust. By applying them there is a possible lead to have a stronger and more effective international business relationships. The need for companies to foster trust in international business is crucial. Trust makes people feel safer, helps to have more open communication and makes business more efficient which can lead to a more successful teamwork. It also lessens chances of miscommunication within employees, so less chance for mistakes. Presenting company as trustworthy can display better reputation of the company and new business partnerships or deals might open up (Zhao, 2014). Trust also impacts and highlights what company's customers and main stakeholders want when it comes to company's cultural knowledge and ethical practices which in long term can strengthening company's viability and competitive advantage. By focusing on trust, companies not only foster their current relationships but creates new paths for connections or ways to new markets.

**Research object** – trust in international business.

**Research aim** - to reveal the communication features which are important in fostering trust.

**Research objectives:**

1. To define trust problematic in context of international business.
2. To identify the features of communication in fostering trust in international business.
3. To justify the methodology of empirical research on trust and communication features in international business.

4. To revise the features of communication based on empirical research findings and develop recommendations for researchers and international companies.

**Research results.** Done research showcases the importance of communication features in fostering trust in international business. It presents the impact of cultural intelligence, technological advancements and language. After done interviews, one more key communication feature emerges – open communication. Open communication mainly impacts relational trust to build strong and long-term connection between partners. Cognitive trust is mainly focused by having good knowledge of cultural intelligence to avoid any possible cultural challenges and use of newest technology advancements, such as artificial intelligence and communication platforms for video calls and instant messaging. Conclusions and recommendations present steps to focus further research and presents focus areas for international companies to have more efficient relationships with their partners.

Tomas Zabelavičius. Komunikacijos ypatumai stiprinant pasitikėjimą tarptautiniame versle. Magistro baigiamasis projektas / vadovė doc. dr. Jurga Duobienė; Kauno technologijos universitetas, Ekonomikos ir verslo fakultetas.

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Kaunas, 2024. 71 puslapiai.

## Santrauka

**Tyrimo aktualumas.** Atsižvelgiant į globalizaciją ir tarpusavyje priklausomas rinkas, pasitikėjimas vaidina vis svarbesnį vaidmenį tarptautiniuose verslo sandoriuose. Norint pritraukti tarptautinę partnerystę, reikia pasitikėjimo, kad tarptautinis bendradarbiavimas vyktų sklandžiai ir produktyviai. Šiandien, kai pasaulyje vyksta tiek daug įvairių įvykių, o skaitmeniniai trikdžiai daro įtaką kiekvienam verslo gyvenimo aspektui, pasitikėjimui tenka vis svarbesnis vaidmuo. Pasaulio ekonomikai tampant vis labiau tarpusavyje priklausomai, supratimas ir pasitikėjimo kūrimas tarptautinėse verslo partnerystėse yra neatsiejamas nuo ilgalaikio tvaraus augimo ir konkurencinio pranašumo (Madhok 2017). Darbe analizuojami giluminiai pasitikėjimo sluoksniai, tiriami visi veiksniai, kurie prisideda prie jo formavimosi ir tęstinumo. Įvertinami iššūkiai, kylantys dėl komunikacijos barjerų, taip pat didelių pasaulinės rinkos pokyčių. Trūksta tyrimų apie tai, kaip etiškumas ir dėmesys tvarumui gali lemti įtaką pasitikėjimui (Gao ir Duysters, 2019). Sutelkiant dėmesį į šią spragą, turi būti atlikta galima komunikacijos ypatumų analizė, kad būtų galima suprasti poveikį pasitikėjimo skatinimui tarptautiniame versle. Tiriant pasitikėjimo vaidmenį tarptautiniame versle, šiame darbe atskleidžiamos žinios apie komunikacijos bruožus pasitikėjimo skatinimui. Juos pritaikius galima vesti prie stipresnių ir efektyvesnių tarptautinio verslo santykių. Įmonėms labai svarbu puoselėti pasitikėjimą tarptautiniame versle. Pasitikėjimas leidžia žmonėms jaustis saugiau, padeda atviresniam bendravimui ir daro verslą efektyvesnį, o tai gali lemti sėkmingesnę komandinę darbą. Jis taip pat sumažina darbuotojų nesusikalbėjimo tikimybę, todėl mažesnė klaidų tikimybė. Pristatant įmonę kaip patikimą, gali būti rodoma geresnė įmonės reputacija ir gali atsirasti naujų verslo partnersčių ar sandorių (Zhao, 2014). Pasitikėjimas taip pat daro įtaką ir išryškina tai, ko nori įmonės klientai ir pagrindiniai suinteresuotieji subjektai, kai kalbama apie įmonės kultūrinės žinias ir etikos praktiką, o tai ilgainiui gali sustiprinti įmonės gyvybingumą ir konkurencinį pranašumą. Sutelkdamos dėmesį į pasitikėjimą įmonės ne tik puoselėja esamus santykius, bet ir sukuria naujus kelius ryšiams ar kelius į naujas rinkas.

**Tyrimo objektas** – pasitikėjimas tarptautiniame versle.

**Tyrimo tikslas** - atskleisti bendravimo ypatumus, kurie yra svarbūs skatinant pasitikėjimą.

**Tyrimo tikslai:**

1. Išnagrinėti pasitikėjimo problematiką tarptautinio verslo kontekste.
2. Atskleisti komunikacijos ypatumus skatinant pasitikėjimą tarptautiniame versle.

3. Pagrįsti pasitikėjimo ir komunikacijos ypatumų tarptautiniame versle empirinio tyrimo metodologiją.
4. Remiantis empirinių tyrimų rezultatais, peržiūrėti komunikacijos ypatumus ir parengti rekomendacijas mokslininkams bei tarptautinėms įmonėms.

**Tyrimo rezultatai.** Atliktas tyrimas atskleidžia komunikacijos ypatybių svarbą skatinant pasitikėjimą tarptautiniame versle. Jame pateikiamas kultūrinio intelekto, technologinės pažangos ir kalbos poveikis. Po atliktų interviu išryškėja dar vienas svarbus bendravimo bruožas - atviras bendravimas. Atviras bendravimas daugiausia daro įtaką santykiniam pasitikėjimui, siekiant sukurti tvirtą ir ilgalaikį ryšį tarp partnerių. Kognityvinis pasitikėjimas daugiausia grindžiamas geru kultūrinių niuansų išmanymu, kad būtų išvengta galimų kultūrinių iššūkių, ir naujausių technologinių pasiekimų, pavyzdžiui, dirbtinio intelekto ir bendravimo platformų, skirtų vaizdo skambučiams ir tiesioginėms žinutėms, naudojimui. Išvadose ir rekomendacijose pateikiami žingsniai, į kuriuos reikėtų orientuotis tolesniuose tyrimuose, ir pristatomos tikslinės sritys, į kurias tarptautinės įmonės galėtų orientuotis, kad jų santykiai su partneriais būtų veiksmingesni.

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## List of Terms

### Terms:

**Trust** - assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something (Wang, 2019).

**Communication features** - it refers to planned and systematic methods used to convey ideas, emotions and feelings effectively within business environments. Communication features play a fundamental role in creating clarity for information sharing between organizations as well as improving relationships within them (Smith and Tahir, 2021)

**International business** - Cross-border trade encompasses any commercial activity designed to facilitate the movement of goods, services, resources, people, ideas or technologies between countries. It requires overseeing business operations across more than one nation (Umemoto, 2020).

## Introduction

**Research relevance.** Given globalization and interdependent markets, trust plays an increasingly pivotal role in international business transactions. Attracting international partnerships requires trust to facilitate smooth and productive international collaborations. With so much happening globally today and digital disruption impacting every aspect of business life, trust plays an increasingly significant role. As global economies become more interdependent, understanding and building trust within international business partnerships are integral for long-term sustainable growth and competitive edge (Madhok 2017). This analysis deep layers of trust, exploring all factors which contributes to its formation and continuity. Evaluating challenges which comes from communication barriers as well as major global market changes. There is a gap of research about the how being ethical and focusing on sustainability can lead the influence on trust (Gao & Duysters, 2019). Focusing on this gap, possible communication features analysis must be done to understand the impact on fostering trust within international business. By studying the role of trust in international business, this thesis shows knowledge of communication features for fostering trust. By applying them there is a possible lead to have a stronger and more effective international business relationships. The need for companies to foster trust in international business is crucial. Trust makes people feel safer, helps to have more open communication and makes business more efficient which can lead to a more successful teamwork. It also lessens chances of miscommunication within employees, so less chance for mistakes. Presenting company as trustworthy can display better reputation of the company and new business partnerships or deals might open up (Zhao, 2014). Trust also impacts and highlights what company's customers and main stakeholders want when it comes to company's cultural knowledge and ethical practices which in long term can strengthening company's viability and competitive advantage. By focusing on trust, companies not only foster their current relationships but creates new paths for connections or ways to new markets.

**Research problem.** Thesis review possible problems of building, maintaining and fostering trust in international business context. Different difficulties can be present, such as cultural diversity, communication barriers, technological disagreements and legal frameworks – all these things can play crucial role into trust formation process. This study tries to uncover how different business can solve these challenges to maintain and foster trust between international relationships. As such, the main question arises: How do communication features contribute to fostering trust in international companies?

**Research object** – trust in international business.

**Research aim** - to reveal the communication features which are important in fostering trust.

**Research objectives:**

1. To define trust problematic in context of international business.
2. To identify the features of communication in fostering trust in international business.
3. To justify the methodology of empirical research on trust and communication features in international business.
4. To revise the features of communication based on empirical research findings and develop recommendations for researchers and international companies.

**Research methods.** The literature review has been done to analyse the theoretical solutions for the problem of the thesis. Comparative methods were used to help summarize these theories into a conceptual model. The empirical research was done with using qualitative approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were recorded and transcribed into raw data. Later, this information has been organized using software MAXQDA 2024 and has been analysed in detail.

## **1. Problem Analysis of the Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business**

Trust is key in international business, particularly given our increasingly connected global economy. Companies frequently collaborate in different forms (joint ventures, strategic alliances and franchise agreements) in order to enhance their strategies and operations. Trust is key in international partnerships, and cultivating it helps these partnerships run more smoothly while meeting any obstacles that may arise from working across cultures and legal systems. This section analysis the importance role of trust in international business partnerships by overviewing existing and important research materials, acknowledging research gaps and finding relevant research problems.

Trust is one of the key factors for companies to be operating in global economy. After the pandemic, it is seen a big change in business environment. Business must react and adapt to still changing work arrangements and success is impacted a lot by technology presence. Remote working now presents some unique challenges which were never understood before, including more solo work, less cooperation, interrupted communication and lessen trust. After these changes, trust becomes even more crucial to the companies work for productive teamwork and goal reach. As Mangla (2021) stated that significance of cultural intelligence for building trust among teams, especially when businesses try to work more internationally, where different people and their cultures and practices are met, are crucial factor to maintain and foster trust.

Many new challenges come up in the global business development - such as slow economic growth, increasing fragility and conflict, and declining trust in government institutions - underscore the significance of trust within international business partnerships. Based on Belhaj (2019), traditional approaches which were known fore more than 50 years is not sufficient enough. New approach should be created, new innovative strategies must become a key factor for maintaining and fostering trust. Trust serves a key factor for fruitful collaboration between business as they are trying to adapt to ever changing markets.

Bourret (2018) expresses his worries about the need of rebuilding trust for goal of having sustainable development of relationships, especially in overlooked territories. Rebuilding, as such, requires unique and bonded understanding, coherent goal reaching steps and mutual representation – these are all key requirements for fostering partnerships of international companies.

Trust is the leading aspect which leads the basis of fruitful international business partnerships are describes using more dependence on each party and focusing more on cooperation than individual work. This step is crucial for building main cooperation ground as well as avoiding risks of any wrongful behaviours, keeping communication clear as much as possible. This leads to companies working together to reaching aims and targets (Li and Zhou 2016). This leads to multiple levels of trust which has biggest impact for wanted collaboration with companies. Following steps were outlined as various forms of trust which effect exact aspects of partnerships dynamics:

- **Relational Trust:** Relying on personal relationships and their following mutual understanding among partners, relational trust is treated as one of the key factors of any successful partnership (Sjodin et al. 2015). It encourages commitment, integrity, and reliability at all stages of its life.
- **Contractual Trust:** Secured through legally binding agreements, contractual trust leverages legal frameworks to ensure adherence and compliance with partnership terms (Kim and Lee 2013).

- Communication Trust: Fostering an environment in which partners can easily share information, align strategies, and resolve conflicts amicably (Lovelock and Weitz, 2018).
- Competence Trust: this concept shows best or worst characteristics of the trustable person. It helps to have a healthy trust between partners because each side knows the skills and strengths of each other, and this might lead to reaching goals together faster and more efficiently (Madhok 2017).

Delving deeper to understanding the problem, its important to evaluate these trust pieces as one. Each piece lets to understand how trust effects global business, layering the foundation for wider research. By evaluating these parts as one, it becomes clearer to link and ensure that the main topic is analysed fully.

Even though trust is one of the key factors for successful business, especially in international levels – it is clear that is not easy to achieve it. Problems such as cultural differences and different managing understanding can make working together more difficult (Madhok 2017). Issues like different legislation and language nuances in each country can make building trust a long-lasting process. It is crucial to recognize and respect these differences to balance work well. Evaluating quick changes in technology and global business economy – it can test the trust and it is strength between partners on any given moment. Passing these problems, it is key to be willing to adjust, have strong agreement on common targets and how should they be reached. Main things of possible conflicts:

- Cultural norms, relational dynamics, and management styles that differ can undermine trust within partnerships (Madhok 2017).
- Conflict of Interests: Disparities in goals, expectations, and interests have the potential to sow seeds of conflict, thereby damaging trust (Park and Kim, 2017).
- Information Asymmetry: Gaps in information, partial knowledge sharing and perceived risks all present barriers that obfuscate trust development (Li and Yao, 2019).

To solve these possible problems, a structured strategy needs to be in place. It is important to understand and notice differences in relationships, how they are handled, and that information is distributed equally for all parties. Without these steps – creating and especially maintaining trust would not be possible between working business partners from different nations. By keeping the attention to and flourishing these areas – only then international business partners can make a safe and trustworthy area to work together and to reach their aims together.

Lack of trust in business agreements between two different parties can cause not fixable problems and stopping existing work. This leads to ruined reputation and not reached goals (Dhanaraj and Parkhe, 2018). Analysing deeper shows how this lack of trust affects different works areas, from newly raised innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence or old school manufacturing. It shows specific and important details to each sector.

- Partnership disruptions and dissolution: Tension between partnerships is created by trust issues that by the end of the day can lead to separation of the connection, rising possible reputation and financial losses (Dhanaraj and Parkhe, 2018).

- Reduced collaboration effectiveness: weakened trust can suppress possible collaboration, characterized by not trustable information sharing between the companies and for their common decision making (Park and Kim, 2017).
- Economic Consequences: lack of trust between partners can lead to reach of different goals, which might be under the wanted return. This can lead to big conflicts and repercussion (Zhao, 2014).

Avoidance of these possible actions is a must to have trustful international business partnership, to start doing so – business must prioritize trust building measures. It is important to have open communication with partners, equal respect and common goals for meeting new challenges. Active steps of addressing trust deficits can lead to building strong foundations for a long-term success in the international business.

Trust is key focus criteria and one of the most important goals for successful businesses from various countries. Building, maintaining and fostering trust can be a difficult process as there are many things to consider, including how overall business is done, people communication differences, cultural nuances – all of them can vary from country to country and business to business. Keeping and nourishing trust after it is already established is a complicated task. This means respecting each party and understanding their point of view should be a daily job for each side. These criteria are only possible if both sides are working together to match their goals and aims. Fostering trust well means quick adaptation when new problems arise without making bigger conflicts. This leads to keeping the relationship tight and strong. When following these steps through all relationship timeline – efforts show the result and makes international business work successful and without stress.

- Cultural Intelligence and Adaptation: vital thing is to understand and respect possible cultural differences. Each organization should quickly adapt to cultural differences as it leads to more peaceful and trusting workplace for workers. Not only quick adaptation is important, but understanding of others point of view is important too (Nguyen and Umemoto, 2020).
- Transparent and Open Communication: there is a no secret that open and transparent communication are biggest success factor to help prevent miscommunication or misinterpretations that can create tension and diminish trust between two sides (Smith and Tahir 2021).
- Consistent and Reliable Behaviour: people respect professionals who has reliability in their actions as their decisions are key factors of building trust on the competence level. People who are reliable on every day matter are most likely to create a security and trustworthiness around them (Wang and Rajagopalan, 2019).
- Leveraging Technology to Foster Trust: current stage of technological advancements such as blockchain technology can lead to higher transparency and of course of higher efficiency in the relationship. This can lead to quicker and more efficient trust building process within international business partners. They can lead to a secure and trustworthy communication between companies (Babin, 2021).

Above mentioned strategies combine interpersonal knowledge, trustable communication and consistent behaviour – all these steps are key factors of building and fostering trust in international business partnerships. Nevertheless, broader research on trust exists within international business



relationships and more focus should be put about the implementation across different industries, legislation and cultures. Businesses are ever changing process so it is important to not forget to take new elements in consideration and technological advancements, sustainability goals and ethics which can lead to trust issues between two sides.

- **Cross-Cultural Dynamics:** Examining trust building mechanisms and their results in various cultural contexts requires close scrutiny (Morris and Schott 2020).
- **Evolve of Technology:** as digitization is having more crucial role on business processes, its important to analyse its effected deeper. Especially as blockchain and artificial intelligence can create semi real scenarios (Cooke 2017).
- **Sustainability and Ethics:** there is a gap of research about the how being ethical and focusing on sustainability can lead the influence on trust (Gao and Duysters, 2019).
- **Legal Frameworks:** Exploration of how different legal frameworks across geographies affect trust in international partnerships requires further study (Gulati and Lakhani, 2019).

More detailed review of mentioned aspects which are impacting trust in international business partnerships is required. It is crucial to evaluate and dissolve possible obstacles that might be an issue when fostering trust in global perspective. Following parts of the study, there will be exploration of methods to encourage trust in the partnerships. Trust should be not just a simple requirement for businesses but a priority goal with high effort to achieve it. Trust is a vital step for adjusting to post pandemic work settings (meaning remote working opportunities) as digital age is creating new options for more structured social conditions. Companies which acknowledge the crucial role of trust are more likely to be more effective withing the international business, leading to more successful and efficient partnerships.

As mentioned before, trust is crucial factors for international businesses, especially for companies who works from completely different nations. After the COVID19 pandemic, the use of remote work tools skyrocketed, this led to new trust issues between and within companies. This is because a lot of different people with their cultural differences are reacting to the changes in their unique way. For businesses it is very important to adapt and understand these possible issues. As such, the main question arises: “How do communication features contribute to fostering trust in international companies?”. Question target is to explore how possibly good communication helps to foster trust in worldwide businesses.

## **2. Theoretical Solutions of the Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business**

Communication features, same as trust are key factors for successful international partnerships in business. This section of thesis analyses those two elements, letting deeper understanding of their definitions, types and connection in-between them. These factors are what recent studies highlights as one of the essential aspects for international success.

Monkemeyer (2023) key points on how social trust is important for international business, especially for deciding how to invest and choose correct investment targets. Studies shows that social trust is not only important for target where to invest, but it is crucial for selecting countries where to set up the company (in which country) for their investment. This is especially important when it comes to being innovative and having common knowledge (Frontiers, 2023). Encouraging new ideas, lowering cost of goods and common knowledge shows how social trust can influence business internationally.

There is no secret that communication features influence trust significantly. Research Gate (2023) research shows the important of trust which is between people within the company and their positive needs and that they all greatly affects the results of negotiations. If you know how relationships between businesses are build in effective ways of communication – you will see that trust is a key factor here.

The final step of theoretical solutions will connect insights of how to communicate and how does communication features affect trust. This combination can lead to new ideas and practical tips about how international and cross-cultural businesses work with their partners from whole words. This research aims to deeply understand the trust and communication using new academic studies to show the connection. Overall, trust leads for a good negotiation strategy for starting, keeping and nurturing successful international partnerships.

### **2.1 The Concept, Types and Stages of Trust**

As mentioned before – trust is crucial and one of the key aspects for making a company successful, especially in international level. It can lead to bigger growth, more important changes and more efficient adaptation to ever changing market. In current market, where new innovative technologies have a bigger part every day in the company life – the way trust is seen keeps changing too. Various research shows the need for and importance of trust to develop relationships and evolve as a corporate. If company wants to have strong, long lasting business relationships and good ethical background – they need to focus on concept of trust. It is the foundation for good partnerships between people involved in a company success (Madhok, 2018).

Understanding the concept of trust is not only viewing how people interact and communicate, but also how ethic's play a crucial step towards company's values and standards. Trust can be seen in completely different ways: openness in communication, strong business practice and reliable job behaviour. Furthermore, trust is one of the focus points if company wants to have quick and effective adaptation to new upcoming challenges and technologies. With the rise of digital technologies, more businesses are focusing to building, maintaining and fostering trust of their customers and suppliers as it is more important than ever in the world where everything is connected. Definitions of trust seen in Table 1 provide an in-depth perspective, how various sides can understand the important role of creating and keeping strong business relationships.

**Table 1.** Definitions of trust in the context of business (Deloitte, 2023; Smit and Tahir, 2021; Harvard Law, 2023)

Author	Definition of Trust in the context of business
Deloitte, 2023	“Trust can be seen as the result of efforts a company undertakes to meet different stakeholder needs, with trust being built when companies demonstrate competence, the appropriate intent, meet capability expectations reliably deliver on promises reliably share information transparently care for well-being of others and demonstrate consistent and reliable actions.”
Smith and Tahir, 2021	“Trust is an integral component of an organization's ability to compete and thrive; businesses which approach it proactively often achieve higher trust maturity than those taking more reactive approaches.”
Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, 2023	“Building trust in business involves understanding what's most important to stakeholders at any one moment - factors like data security, high-quality customer service products/services/wage arrangements/pay rates; protecting employee data/communication clearly are also seen as being key in building the necessary rapport”
Piricz, 2018	“In business, trust is defined as the belief in the reliability, integrity, and competence of a partner. It plays a crucial role in facilitating successful cooperative interactions and buyer-seller relationships by reducing transaction costs and increasing confidence in equitable resolutions”

Trust in business is defined and understood by being flexible from different point of view and it is a crucial criterion for company’s success. As new, innovative technology emergers and more digital methods become common – people are seeing trust as having many different approaches. It is not only how company communicate between their partners, but it is also about the company’s ethics and values. Open and honest communication shows company as reliable business partners with clear plan. Trust is crucial step when dealing with problems and new technologies. Table 1 presents trust with it is many sides as it is a key to build, maintain and foster good business relationships.

### 2.1.1 Trust Types in International Business

Understanding different forms of trust is essential for organization success and long-lasting capabilities in ever changing business world. Trust understanding changes and it shaped by people who can understand trust from their point of view. It includes principles of ethic, values and ability to adapt for new technologies or challenges.

Recent studies show the significant importance of trust for growing business. Fostering trust means understanding and meeting what different businesses expect and want. As example, customers who cares about data safety, good customer service and having reliable products. While employees may focus on fair compensation, data protection and receive clear information from business. Companies must understand completely different needs and work together with each group. By doing so, building trust steps will be done properly and maintaining it will be easier.

As mentioned before, trust is fundamental part in the international business. It should not be treated as a common thing between people, but something that all relationships should work on. Different cultures, rules and personal point of views can shape trust understanding differently. It is important not to see trust a one thing, instead understand that it might come from different features and aspects, meaning trust have many types. Acknowledging these differences can help company grow in international business and lead to new and stronger connections between partners.

Trust in international business covers more than just common transactions and deals. It is key to making strategic decisions, fostering partnerships and achieving company's goals. There are many kinds of trust because of different cultures, unique law legislation and market changes in the international business. Understanding trust's role and importance in global market, means evaluating all different types with each representing what trust is:

1. **Cognitive Trust:** this trust arises when one part think that other part has some unique expertise and practice in the field. This is shown by their knowledge and proof of how they skilled are. Johnson and Grayson (2019) highlights how important this trust type is for creating new business relationships that rely on each party skills.
2. **Affective Trust:** it is about more than just being good at your job, it includes extra mile steps, such as feelings and caring about the people. Miller and Sondergaard (2020) analyses that this trust type can foster during spending time together and going through similar experiences. Affective trust is key for long term international business relationships because it combines relation created at work and emotional connection. This contributes equally to success of the partnership over time.
3. **Institutional Trust:** this trust type can be defined as most formal type as it comes through official systems, such as laws, regulations and standards of industry. Institutional trust has less connection within partners, but higher trust factors. Wang and Kafourus (2021) indicates that this trust type is important for institutional partners where are no emotions included and finance institutions too, as there are no interpretations.
4. **Calculated Trust:** this trust is based on calculations made within companies. They are calculation if there is more to gain or lose from specific relationship. It is only based about good and bad before making decisions. Green (2022) analysed that this kind of trust is really common in early stages of new international partnerships where all decisions have crucial impact on building trust.
5. **Relational Trust:** relation trust fosters when partners have really great interactions and experiences, they might share same goals and values, this can lead to both sided kindnesses. Brown (2023) point out that this type of trust is crucial for partners who are from different countries. It is because building relational trust create special bond over time because of shared experiences.

Trust in international business is really complicated factor which affects every part of partnerships and businesses around the world. It is the power, which is unseen, but have many challenges which needs to be overcome to have successful partnerships. Culture and different rules make it possible to create successful partnerships across different regions. Especially when companies work globally, dealing with complicated legislation and different cultures can make things about trust uncertain. In these cases – trust plays even more crucial part.

Many different layers are within trust understanding and this makes even harder to analyse it. It is one of the main things if company wants to have successful and fruitful relationships, trust has major impact for building, maintaining and fostering trust. It is not just about believing in someone, but also understand their skills, commitment to common targets and high standards (Krakover 2018). Because of these different layers, many important roles are created for trust. It is important to understand all perspectives and types so company can use it as advantage.

Trust evolves in international business and can be accessed in many different ways at the same time. Two main types of trust are present – cognitive trust and relational trust. They are crucial for building, maintaining and fostering successful business partnerships between international relations. As these two types of trust has the biggest impact for fostering trust in partnerships – they there selected for deeper analysis.

- Cognitive Trust is a fundamental in the international business companies. Companies can use it as the main foundation to build parentships in foreign countries. Especially where is a completely new areas or countries, where company might not have the relationships or experiences, only skills can play big part when forming trust. Cognitive trust specifically helps companies to deal with multiple cultural differences, legislations and business nuances.
- Relational Trust is known for strong and long-term relationships across countries with important role for maintaining and fostering trust. While cognitive trust leads to new partnerships – relation trust keeps them going. Here, experience it is not so important, main things is emotional ties, common understand and goals, personal recommendations and connections are really important too. These help businesses stay strong even when companies need to adapt to ever changing markets.

Without international partnerships, growth of business would be hardly possible. While operating business globally, it is important to carefully evaluate partners knowledge and reliability (Thompson and Hamilton, 2020). Having knowledge about partners history and good reputation help build close bond between personal and business relationships. Evaluating mindset carefully is key in international business, especially if you can't work face to face and must work in different countries, different offices. Of course, remote work helps companies feel confident while working with partners from other countries. It is all about confidence between the partners, as they can judge if they parent has done a good job on specific problems and can handle them in the future, the same way is with their promises (Martinez 2019).

- Cognitive Trust: At its heart, cognitive trust in international business involves believing in one partner's professional competence and reliability based on evidence provided about that counterpart's capabilities and track record. Cognitive trust becomes especially essential in situations when direct supervision cannot take place due to geographical or cultural distance. Companies rely on cognitive assessment in such instances in order to make sure their overseas partners fulfil all expectations by adhering to mutually agreed upon standards and practices. Johnson and Grayson (2019) advocate the significance of cognitive trust during early business relationships; its foundation provides essential decision-making support when considering potential risks and benefits of partnerships.

Switching from analysis of cognitive trust which is a key component to building trust in international relationships, to relational trust. Cognitive trust is about the experience and professional skills, relational trust is completely opposite, this is deeper into personal connections and feelings. It way more important for keeping a strong and longer-term relationship (Robinson, 2021). This change of aspect from professional respect to more profound personal level of understanding is key for fostering trust in international business. It shows the shift from initial contact about how person can do this job to really caring and understanding each other, working side by side to reach common goals (Patel, 2022).

- **Relational Trust:** in comparison, relational trust is built based on personal connection and relationships, emotional connection is important too between business partners. It goes way deeper and beyond just from professional respect, to include deeper and share understanding about the common goals. This kind of trust is crucial for long lasting business relationships. It becomes handy and useful for more complicated situations, for example when business market changes a lot or when organization is going through crucial changes.

Understanding and effectively managing important relationship details are key components for international business companies. Cognitive and relational aspects each play their own distinct part, each helping establish or sustain cross-border partnerships.

Cognitive considerations mean judging and trusting foreign partners based on their recommendations, skills and reliability. This evaluation comes from partners track record and common logic. Doing this kind of evaluation when in existence of business partnerships helps businesses feel confident about working together in the whole world, trusting what each side of relationships can bring to the table.

On the other hand, relational aspects of trust aim to build way deeper personal connections that might exceed just a professional talk. This can build and maintain through regular and positives business interactions that build a shared understanding and commitment. This leads to the creation of an emotional bond that keeps things stable when markets crashes or becomes unpredictable. These parts combined makes a really strong foundations for international business relationships. Cognitive trust aspects foster trust in experience and professional skills, while relation parts make these partnerships stronger through personal ties. The balanced of this mix, makes sures that international projects are started well and then lasts long time.

**Table 2.** Trust types and their importance for international business (Grayson, 2019 and Lee, 2023)

Trust type	Description	Importance
Cognitive trust	Involves believing in one partner's professional competence and reliability (Grayson, 2019)	Fundamental in international business, particularly when direct oversight is impractical, as it allows companies to rely on a partner's proven competence
Relational trust	Relies upon personal connections and emotional bonds between business partners to foster long term partnerships (Lee, 2023)	Crucial for navigating complex and uncertain environments by fostering resilient, long-term partnerships

By focusing on both – logically accessing experiences and creating emotional bond, businesses can move and expand through global markets in more efficient way. This approach leads to a strong, mutual goal seeking international relationships that are well prepared to deal with today’s business challenges and worries.

### 2.1.2 Building, Maintaining and Fostering Trust

At an international business level, developing good and long-term relationships is based on three main important steps – building trust, maintaining trust and fostering trust. Building trust is done by understanding different cultures, clear communication and being reliable. Maintaining trust needs a consistency of good work, quick adaptation and great disagreements solving. Fostering trust means working really closely with your partners for a long term, common goals should be reached, and

overall partnership should be successful for both sides. Understanding and knowing these three steps helps in making durable international business relationships in today's global business.

Building trust in international business is a key factor for a successful company expansion and goal reaching. While it may raise unique challenges because of different cultures, nuances of communication and operation context, but building trust needs a carefully build strategy with multiple steps to reach the wanted result. These steps include understanding diverse cultures, effective communication features, reliability proof and expertise/experience show of. These are the main parts of first steps to build trust in international businesses. More detail information:

- **Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences:** knowledge about cultural values, they are centre of international business. Just recognizing cultural differences is not enough, it is important to respect the way people from different countries and cultures do business alone and in partnerships. This means adjusting how company behaves and what actions they are making. This shows the real understanding about how you care on these cultural differences. Adapting in this way requires high sensitivity for these nuances (Hofstede, 2011). It shows that it is a smart move of your awareness of others side point of view. Being flexible helps build trust more than just making pure deals with your partners. It creates more friendly connection – relational trust – that makes both sides value each other more, leading to a long-term relationship based on common goals for companies.
- **Establish Effective Communication Channels:** in any international business, being able to communicate clearly is one of the crucial steps to foster trust. Getting past through language barriers, understanding body language and using right technological tools are good factors to create new and maintain existent relationships. Company which has employees which speak two or more languages or uses professional translators can help and solve communication problems within company and outside company (Meyer, 2017). Also, using video calls tools helps teams feel closer if they work remotely, this leads to more clear communication between coworkers, by the end of the day – this leads to building trust, no matter from where you are working.
- **Demonstrating Reliability and Competence:** International business relies heavily on trust. Being reliable means always finish tasks within stated timeframes, doing a good job on reaching goals and without any nuances. Also, sharing know how can lead to partners to trust company more (Barnes, 2018) within international business partnerships.

Building trust in international business highlights the understanding of different cultures interactions. Being intelligence about diverse cultures is crucial. This means not just understanding different cultures, but to have skills of adaptation to work with multiple cultures (Van Dyne, 2015). Companies that teach their employees about cultures and how to adjust to them, leads to have stronger relationships and better chance of building, maintaining and fostering trust with markets all over the world.

Effective communication is an essential aspect of trust-building. It is not just about communicating in the same language but understanding body language and different behaviours in cultures. As example, being direct and strong handed can be understandable in one culture but seen as rude behaviour in another. Clear understanding, broad communication and keeping people involved can build trust stronger. Having open and equal rules help people feel more respect towards them and comfortable. These lead to easier building of trust. Being consistent and open in how business is being

operated – shows higher reliability and less risk, especially when working within international companies (George, 2018). Businesses that show good qualities are often thought of as trustworthy partners. This is key factors because working with people from different cultures can be uncertain.

Building trust is very dynamic and complex task, even though its crucial for business expansion. It requires a good balance of cultural understanding, effective talking and show of expertise. Companies need to work precisely on trust building to create long lasting and strong relationships that helps to success in the worldwide markets.

Maintaining trust is just as important in global business relations. Once trust is built, businesses must focus on working to make these relationships stronger. This means that at this stage, for company to grow the success, it needs not only to keep the things same as they are now, but to go extra mile. It is about making bond and trust stronger by not letting down your partner, having clear communication and moving towards common goals. This is crucial to make sure relationship grows for both partners, because markets change every day. To have a long lasting and strong partnerships, companies need continuous attention and adaptations if companies want to foster trust (Wilkinson and Huang, 2020).  
Maintaining trust stage:

- **Consistent Performance and Responsive Adaptation:** being reliable in what you do is crucial to the partners which surrounds you. If you always perform well, partners will know that they can count on you to handle possible problems if needed. It is also important to quickly adjust to current market situations, adapt for customer needs and meet the common goal targets (Smith and Taylor, 2019). By being both – dependable and quick to change when needed – relationships stay strong and long term. This way, they can solve all rose problems and use them as possible advantages.
- **Transparent Communication and Conflict Resolution:** open and clear communication is important for keeping international business relationships going in long term perspective (Kim, 2022). This includes often sharing common knowledge, steps to achieve goals and importantly – sharing feedback. When fights or disagreements happen, solving them quickly and crucially – fairly – is important to keep trust (Wilson, 2021). Company should make sure that everyone respects both parties and take care of the problems before they get too big and may destroy partnerships.
- **Align Values and Goals to Foster Partnership:** Aligning values and goals to foster partnership is an ongoing endeavour that strengthens partnerships. Shared objectives provide a sense of unity and purpose, while a commitment to continuous improvement, both operationally as well as by adapting new trends or technologies shows dedication towards excellence and growth (Martinez and Rodriguez 2021).

Maintaining trust between global corporate relations is a multifaceted task that goes far beyond operational excellence, including communication features, cultural sensitivity and creating a shared vision of the future. Successful businesses stand out in today's volatile global marketplace by their ability to maintain relationships that support continued business operations (Johnson and Anderson 2020). Consistent performance, effective communication and consistent alignment of values are not just practices but investments for maintaining international partnerships that thrive for long. Establishing trust requires building an arrangement capable of dealing with the complexity of global markets while guaranteeing mutual growth and prosperity for both sides.



Fostering trust between global corporate relationships represents the peak of partnership development. At this high level, it is not enough just simply having trust, you need to grow it deeper to make relationship even stronger. Working well together, understanding each other and sharing common goals should be the main aspects and criteria's how partners should interact with each other. This trust stage is about actively working together to come up with new ideas to collaborate with each other and focus of growing business. Fostering trust is crucial in ever changing today's markets because it helps companies reach goals faster and in more efficient ways. This leads to combine each parts strength and overcome challenges easier (Peterson, 2022). Fostering trust, if done correctly, can lead to long-term success and creation of new competitive advantages. Strategies to foster trust:

- **Proactive Engagement and Collaboration:** making partnership stronger by trusting each other by doing good things for both partnership sides. This could lead to working on new projects, innovating new things or doing community service together (Thompson, 2019). Doing all those things, creates special bond that leads to more close and dependable business relationships.
- **Long-Term Perspective and Mutual Growth:** Building trust takes an investment of time, thought and resources in both parties involved. They should match their both sides goals and put their monetary resources into making plans that could help both sides to grow (Gruber, 2019). Trust is more just a relation or exchanging things, it is about forming team that aims for common success, leading to a long-term partnership that are benefiting both sides.
- **Innovative Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Fostering innovation and sharing knowledge is central to building trust between two partners. Doing projects together, sharing knowledge about market insights will lead to fostering trust between sides. It will also push them both to come up with advanced solutions in some difficult or problematic situations in international business markets (Petersen, 2021).

Fostering trust among global corporate relationships can be an intricate and dynamic process that demands continual efforts, careful strategic foresight and an unwavering dedication to mutual success. Building an ecosystem of collaboration requires developing relationships in which both partners invest their success as much in each other's as they do in themselves. As global business environments shift constantly and competition ferociously, cultivating deep trusting relationships becomes ever more crucial to remaining relevant and competitive. Fostering trust not only allows entities to leverage their collective strengths more efficiently, leading to innovative solutions, improved market presence and sustained competitive advantage - but is also a philosophy which guides how entities collaborate, interact and expand within global markets.

Fostering trust in international business relationships is a complex, but a must task that needs constant working on it. Smart planning and strong commitment from both sides are crucial for everyone success. Creating a supportive environment for working together means forming both sided partnerships, where each side cares equally about the other side. As the world in international business changes quickly and competition gets tougher every day, having a long term, strong and trusting relationships is increasingly important to have competitive advantages against your opponents. Building, and especially fostering trust leads to companies work better together, this leads to creation of new ideas, stronger position in the market. It is also about the ways how companies work, talk and grow together in international markets.

All in all, trust builds through three stages in global business environments: credibility building, maintaining confidence and creating deep relations. Initial stages involve cultural awareness, effective communication channels and proving dependability - essential building steps of trust that enable long-term international relationships to reach common success. As trust build, it is important to understand possible cultural differences, have a clear communication path within sides and show the reliability at the start of relationship.

Maintaining trust requires consistent performance, quick adaptation and effective disagreements solutions. This helps make their working relationship more trustworthy and stronger. At this point, adaption, clear communication and shared common values are crucial for keeping their partnerships tight, especially in these ever-changing global markets. Fostering deep trust between corporate relationships leads to taking trust to a deeper level by active engagement of activities, innovating together with your partners and prioritizing long term mutual growth though common projects and main goals to benefit both companies. Trust plays an integral part of building deeper ties that lets companies to synergize together efficiently while creating new competitive advantages against competitors in ever changing markets. Starting with credibility and building up to a strong reliance on each other is the way to create lasting business parentships across the world, this leads to showing how important is trust at every step of successful international business relationships.

## **2.2 Communication Features in International Businesses**

In current age, all international businesses are linked somehow, so it is really important to have a good and clear communication. When companies expand beyond local markets into the global arena, they might face big challenges because of different cultures, languages and ways of building businesses. This section delves deeper into companies' complex communication and highlights its crucial role in the successful international and cross-cultural business relationships.

As Johnson and Lee (2019) mentions, effective international business depends on upon being able to communicate across cultural and linguistic divides effectively. They explain that different cultures can deliver same message with completely different understanding for the end user. It can be conveyed and interpreted in completely opposite ways between people. This can lead to big misunderstandings that can mess up negotiations, team management or even marketing campaigns across the world. So, it is really important for businesses who works internationally to really get how cultures differ and change, how they communicate based on this knowledge. Nguyen and Umemoto (2020), talks about principle called cultural intelligence in communication. It includes empathy engagement as well as adapting strategically for various communication styles and norms. This is key factor for businesses around the world, because even a small number of mistakes or understanding in how we communicate between each other – can cause break up of relationships or loosing clients.

Advancements in communication technology, especially after COVID19, have changed the point of view of international business. Babin (2021) highlights that things such as video calls and team software have been game changes. These digital tools help people work together from all around the world for the same company, with the same goals without any trouble. Using more advanced technologies, such as AI – can make things even smoother and more efficient. Barnes (2018) talks and analyses the importance of how to deal with language problems within international company. Hiring people who have a skill of speaking more than two languages, using translation services and being as clear as possible in communication are key steps to make sure we understand each other well

and work towards common company goals together. Using these approaches not only helps workers to get past over the language and cultural differences but shows the respect that all cultures are equally important. This respect is leading prospect to build, maintain and foster trust within international companies.

Overall, this section presents an in-depth analysis of the essential elements that are key for effective international company communication. It highlights cultural intelligence, technological innovations and language barriers as the cornerstones for a success when doing business internationally. If companies become good or solves these steps, they for sure will do well in global expansions for their company, they will build and maintain new relationships which will be based on both sided trust, respect and shared goals. As business keeps growing fast across different cultures, being able to communicate well is not just an advantage, but it is an essential part to survive and have a great success within increasingly global business world.

### 2.2.1 Main Communication Features

Communication within global business settings has never been more essential. As our world becomes more connected, businesses are expanding beyond local markets into global areas where diverse cultures, languages and practices mix up. Communication features in international companies must not only be assets, but they are also an absolute requirement in today's globalized environment (Barnes, 2018). Effective communication goals are to overcome possible differences in culture, language and location that come as nuances from working worldwide. It has a big impact on international partnerships, relations with client and internal teams' dynamics. Understanding these cultural communication nuances and using the correct technology to lessen these factors are lead aspects of the successful international business practices. Effective communication is not only about using words. It means knowing, understanding and using different ways of doing business, how to negotiate in different cultures, make decisions based on knowledge and understanding cultural differences and how they affect work together.

- 1. Importance of Effective Communication in International Business:** effective communication is a crucial step for successful international operations. It is very important when communicating with partners, managing multicultural teams and launching marketing campaigns for products internationally. Making sure that everyone understands and respects what your company message says across the world is crucial for companies' success. Misunderstanding words because of not clear communication can cause big problems within international relationships. Companies must have an in-depth knowledge about the market they are in and adapt their strategies accordingly of cultural nuances.

**Table 3.** Importance of Effective Communication in International Business (Johnson and Lee, 2019)

Element	Description	Importance
Negotiation skills	Ability to negotiate across different cultures	Crucial for securing business deals, especially internationally
Multicultural Team Management	Managing diverse teams effectively	Vital for best possible productivity and team harmony
Cross Border Marketing	Tailoring marketing strategies for global research	One of the key factors for successful entry to new markets

**2. Cultural Intelligence in Communication:** Cultural intelligence is at the core of international business communication (Nguyen and Umemoto, 2020). This involves understanding communication styles, cultural norms and expectations in other cultures. These steps are not easily done without the help of knowledge which is possible to get by either doing market research or getting help from outsourced sources (Meyer, 2017). Cultural intelligence is shown by being open for new ideas and having a possibility understand from other side point of view. This makes communication between different culture people be more effective (Umemoto, 2020). Also, nonverbal cues such as body language and other indirect communication is crucial for clear communication.

**Table 4.** Cultural Intelligence in communication (Meyer, 2017)

Element	Description	Importance
Understanding Styles	Recognizing and adapting to various communication styles	Enhances effectiveness in multicultural settings
Recognizing Norms	Awareness of different cultural norms and expectations	Prevents misunderstandings and fosters respect
Empathic Dialogue	Communicating with empathy and openness	Build trust and stronger business relationships

**3. Technological Advancements in Communication:** Communication technologies have transformed how international businesses operate (Zhao and Babin, 2021). Tools like video conferencing, artificial intelligence software and digital communication platforms have become essential parts of global business environments in recent years, especially after the pandemic. These leads of new real-time communications as well as resource sharing between partners in the ways that was hardly imaginable before. Also, artificial intelligence integration to daily job features enhances the efficiency even more and this may lead for more optimized and clear global communications.

**Table 5.** Technological advancements in communication (Zhoa and Babin, 2021)

Element	Description	Importance
Video Conferencing	Facilitates face to face meetings virtually	Overcomes geographical barriers
Collaborative Software	Enables joint project management and communication	Enhances teamwork and productivity
Artificial Intelligence integration	Optimizes communication tools for efficiency	Streamlines processes and decision making

**4. Language Barriers and Multilingual Communication:** getting past over the language barriers is a big challenge, but a crucial if business wants to succeed (Barnes, 2018). Hiring people who has ability to speak multiple languages or using translator services can help to avoid any miscommunication and confusions, this leads to way less problems with coworkers. Talking in different languages it is not just about words but can also help feel closer to each other and connected to common companies' goals. This can improve communication and relationships in a good way.

**Table 6.** Language barriers and multilingual communication (Barnes, 2018)

Element	Description	Importance
Hiring multilingual staff	Employing staff fluent in various languages	Facilitates easy going and clear communication
Using Translation services	Utilizing professional translation for accuracy	Ensures correct conveyance of messages
Adopting clear language	Simplifying language for clarity	Reduces misunderstandings in communication

**5. The Role of Non-Verbal Communication:** Nonverbal communications such as body language and facial expressions vary significantly across cultures (Hofstede, 2011), making understanding these differences essential to avoid misinterpretations and effectively communicating in a global setting. Non-verbal cues sometimes convey more information than spoken words can, leading to misreading them leading to potential misunderstandings if misread wrong. Therefore, international business professionals must pay close attention to subtleties within non-verbal language use so as to adapt non-verbal communications accordingly.

**Table 7.** The Role of Non-Verbal communication (Hofstede, 2011)

Element	Description	Importance
Body Language	Differences in gestures and postures	Can convey meanings not expressed verbally
Facial Expressions	Varying interpretation for facial expressions	Crucial for conveying emotions and reactions
Gestures	Specific gestures can have different understanding and meanings	Important in understanding of not said messages

**6. Transparency and Open Communication:** Transparency and openness are crucial in building trust in international business settings (Smith and Tahir, 2021). Honest communication fosters reliability and integrity between participants that is necessary in maintaining strong business relationships. Open lines of communication encourage feedback, problem-solving efforts, idea exchanges as well as innovative growth.

**Table 8.** Transparency and open communication (Smith and Tahir, 2021)

Element	Description	Importance
Honest communication	Clear and open exchange of information	Builds trust and reliability in relationships
Open and detailed feedback	Encouraging and valuing feedback from all levels	Promotes problem solving and innovation
Idea Exchange	Sharing and discussing ideas freely	Fosters creativity and collaborative growth

Effective communication features in international companies require many components and steps, from understanding cultural nuances and using technological tools proficiently, to being able to manage language barriers effectively. Nonverbal communication, transparency and effective crisis communications play key roles. By incorporating these components, businesses can build long-lasting, trusting relationships worldwide for long-term success in international markets. Communication across cultures isn't simply an advantage in today's globalized environment - it is

crucial for survival and success. Companies who master international communication can navigate the complexities of global business with greater ease, building relationships based on trust, understanding, respect and mutual gain. Effective communication in international business means building bridges among people, transcending divisions and forging an international consensus that transcends national borders - thus unlocking global business opportunities to drive success in an ever-evolved globalized environment.

### **2.2.2 Noteworthy Communication Features for International Business**

Moving forward to understand which of mentioned communication features are most important, it is already known that effective communication are cornerstones of successful international business. It is critical for dealing complex cultural nuances. There are three main parts that stand out: cultural intelligence in communication, technological advancements and managing language barriers. These parts were picked because they have the biggest impact on how international business works. They come in place when talking with different people around the world, making sure that message is clear and understood in the way it should be. As business keeps growing internationally and beyond home markets borders – knowing and using these components becomes not only a strong competitive advantage but a necessary for being successful in the global market. More detailed analysis of noteworthy components:

- 1. Cultural Intelligence in Communication:** Cultural intelligence in international business communication extends far beyond awareness of various practices and customs. It is more about being intelligent about how you deal with people from different places. Empathetic, flexible and good at planning – these are the key aspects for cultural intelligence (Nguyen and Umemoto, 2020). Authors mention that is important to understand what people from different cultures treat and consider as a normality and how they communicate. Meyer (2017) adds that being culturally intelligent can reshape your business plans to fit more to the culture standards and practices. Cultural intelligence is always developing feature which is fundamentally affected by experience and exposure. Even smallest details with cultural nuances can lead a company to a success or a failure. Also, being culturally intelligent helps create a good environment at work, where is a place for coworkers as a happy place. This leads to higher efficiently and higher company morale.
- 2. Technological Advancements in Communication:** technological advancements have a crucial role in international business communication, especially after COVID19 pandemic. Zhao and Babin (2021) analyses digital communication tools affect on cross border interactions while deepening the efficiency and effectiveness. In most recent time, majority of people use video calls and software that lets people work together no matter where they are, this removes problems of employing workers from all over the world. Evaluating benefits of artificial intelligence too, this leads for way higher efficiency of working. Overall, innovative technology not only let coworkers communicate easier, but it connects business from around the world that work in completely different regions and cultures to work for the same or common goals. One more thing to note that technology can break the time zone barriers and encourage real time work to make everything run smoothly and efficiently.
- 3. Language Barriers and Multilingual Communication:** Barnes (2018) states that dealing with language barriers is a step with much be dealt with, as it is one of the greatest challenges of international business. Employing staff who can speak multiple languages, having a translation

service and implementing clear and straightforward language are not only key measurements to have in the company, but they serve as help for people to understand each other better, this leads to building trust within workers and good business connections. Speaking multiple languages not only lessen communication problems, but also grows respect from different cultures, which is key if company wants to build, maintain and foster trust in international business. It is crucial that communication should be clear for all sides to have correct messages understanding without a risk of misinterpretation and to let people feel included in companies work.

Below in Table 9 is presented a comparative analysis of selected key communication components which are analysed above. They all have the biggest role in international business. This analysis provides insights into how different communication features and practices impact global business interactions and relationships, highlighting cultural norms and their influence on international business level. Table explains the component, it is description and role in international business.

**Table 9.** Comparative analysis of Key Communication components

Component	Description	Role in International Business
Cultural Intelligence	Knowledge about cultural differences	Enhances negotiation and team dynamics
Technological Advancements	Utilizing digital tools for efficient communication	Breaks down geographical and temporal barriers
Language Barriers	Managing communication across different languages	Ensures clarity and inclusivity in messaging

Overall, evaluating all of these three important elements-cultural intelligence, technological progress and language barrier management-has illustrated their critical significance within international business communication. Each component plays an essential part in how international businesses connect and work towards common goals. Cultural intelligence enhances interactions through empathy and adaptation, technological innovations help employees work together even when they are far away from each other, while effective language management ensures clarity and mutual understanding. Managing all of three of these elements can be a tricky job, but it enables businesses to adapt to ever changing business markets more successfully. As business in international levels can expand quickly, being able to communicate targets to each understanding is a key factor for success of the company. Using technology to lessen the gap between different cultures is a foundation for a strong and lasting international business connections.

### **2.3 Double Side Effect in Between Trust and Communication Features in International Businesses**

Within the fast-changing market of international business, trust and communication are inevitably crossed and mixed. That is why this section seeks to explore how they depend on each other. It explores and explains how they work together in a way to help international companies to interact and reach common goals together.

As detailed in section 2.1, trust is at the core of every successful business relationship. Trust involves many layers and stages – it needs to be a priority and cared in every way people interact. It starts from building trust, then maintaining trust over the longer period of time and then fostering trust to grow both companies. Trust is not only about someone’s reliability, it is about the expertise people have as a specialist, respect for each other and following rules. For international companies which mainly

operates not in their home market – trust is even more crucial aspect for success. When making cross border deals – without trust can lead to big miscommunications or not evaluated risks, which can lead to not finalising deals or losing money. It will make decisions even harder.

However, section 2.2's focus on communication features used by international companies demonstrates the value of effective communication within and outside the company. Effective communication does not simply involve exchanging and sharing information. Its goal should be making sure that messages are understood in the same way across cultures and languages without any possible miscommunication. If not, this can lead to causing conflicts, mistrust or ultimately business failures. International companies with various cultures workforces or clients with many cultural differences require the ability to effectively communicate, as miscommunication can quickly escalate into conflict or loosing trust and this, ultimately can end in business failures.

Trust and communication features are the main areas for this study. Trust impacts communication features in several possible ways. It is seen that when people trust each other a lot – communication tends to be way more open, clear and honest as employees feel safe to share their ideas, providing honest feedback and raising possible concerns. This type of trust also has a big impact on strengthening trust that can lead to improved business results. On the other hand, when there is not much trust between employees – people might hold up information and this can lead to misleading or misunderstandings, which will hurt companies' results.

Communication features which are open and honest not only reflect an organization's integrity but can build trust between employees, customers and partners alike. Sharing information about companies' goals, how they will be reached, rules and decisions openly – can make workers trust company more. At the same time, being clear with people outside the company shows brand's integrity and maturity. This leads to fostering trust with existing clients and building trust with new possible clients. Attention to details, such as different cultural nuances, language differences and body language is a key for successful business expansion. Companies who have trained employees to understand and use cultural advantages leads to creation of successful and long-term partnerships with organizations from all other the world.

This section will examine how trust and communication features interact in international business environments, providing practical examples that demonstrate their dependence on each other as well as any negative consequences from one to the other. Case studies which show the effect of talking and communicating the right way, how it leads to helping foster trust. Understanding how trust and communication features work together in international business isn't just factors what need to be considered, it is a must-do step for all companies which want to expand, especially at the international level. Insights analysed through these case studies will highlight steps which need to be done for successful companies' growth outside their home market.

### **2.3.1 Trust Importance in Communication**

Trust and communication in business play a crucial role in shaping organizational features and operations. Reliability is not only feature expected when trusting someone, it also means to act ethically in all situations, show expertise in work situations and have respect to others. When businesses operate in international level with different cultures, laws and people – trust becomes even more essential than working in home country. It acts as key support for maintaining and fostering



strong, long-term business relationships, this can lead to managing and lowering possible risks of business expansion.

Effective communication goes beyond simply exchange of information. It involves making sure that messages are clear and understood appropriately across different cultures and languages. International companies rely really much on effective communication as miscommunication and misinterpretations of cultural differences can cause losing trust between employees, leading to conflict, mistrust and ultimately can lead to possible business failures. The way company choose communication plan to inside and outside people can influence people trust ability of the company.

This section seeks to examine how trust influences communication features within businesses. It analyses how communication features influence maintaining and fostering trust too. Deeper exploration of how trust can make it easier to communicate openly, share information efficiently and create a safe space for people to open up for creating new ideas and providing feedback.

- **Trust and Open Communication:** Trust fosters an environment of open and honest communication among employees and managers. In such an atmosphere, employees may feel more inclined to exchange freely shared information, ask pertinent questions, provide honest feedback and further build mutual understanding while deepening trust further. According to Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou's (2020) findings, open dialogue combined with trust leads to more successful problem-solving, decision-making processes as it allows the free flow of ideas while encouraging constructive criticism and critical thought processes.
- **Trust and Effective Leadership Communication:** Trust influences how leaders convey organizational goals and strategies. Trusting leaders are more apt at motivating and inspiring employees. According to Godlovitch (2013), this trust allows leaders to demonstrate tasks clearly while helping employees improve performance--leading directly to increased productivity that ultimately improves sales profits and sales volumes.
- **Horizontal Communication and Trust:** When operating within an environment of trust, horizontal communication - exchanging information among employees at similar levels - becomes more effective. Employees can share important details, actively contribute to problem-solving sessions, and collaborate for successful execution of duties. Otoo (2020) claims this type of exchange improves quality information transmission while strengthening employee relations thereby improving overall organizational productivity.
- **Trust and Decision-Making:** Communication plays an integral part in decision-making processes. Effective communications enable an exchange of ideas leading to rational solutions; Godlovitch (2013) stress the necessity for businesses to use effective communications as the means for making well-informed business decisions that support growth.
- **Trust Enhancing Teamwork and Performance:** Effective communication that fosters trust can significantly strengthen teamwork within an organization. When everyone in the company understands what the main goals is – they can help reach it. Teamwork makes everyone better working their jobs as the common goal is set and it is clear. This leads to higher productivity and using teamwork – company can expand faster.

In international business, trust might be fostered through couple different but key factors, such as cultural intelligence, technology advancements and language skills. Cultural intelligence impacts of trust building by making it easier to understand different point of views of all sides of partnership, which leads to clear, honest and open communication. Technology advancements offers way to communicate more efficiently, letting to connect with people from all over the world which leads to lower count of misunderstandings. Additionally, language skills are crucial while building, maintaining and fostering trust because of its strong impact towards conceptual trust as it is based on expertise and showing skills. Better communication helps coworkers be connected to each other, having higher morale and might lead to new innovative business ideas. Overall, those factors are crucial while expanding business in international level which want to stay ahead of competitors. A strong back bone in trust, backed by highlighted communication features leads to efficient work in the company and can lead of faster company's growth. Knowledge of how to use cultural intelligence, technology advancements and language can be key to company's success.

### **2.3.2 Impact of Communication Features on Trust in Business**

Trust is at the foundation of every successful international partnership and effective communication features are integral for fostering it. In this section various communication features will be analysed and their influence on trust in international business through most recent literature sources that analyses these relationships deeper between trust building, maintaining and fostering. In today's world, where businesses are interconnected between countries, how company communicate is one of the most important things for building trust. With people working from different cultures and languages who work together – communication becomes not just a tool to exchange the information. It is also a tool for building trust and better understanding of both sides of relationships. Trust is crucial step for creating strong, long lasting international business relationships. This can lead for better international market expansion. When companies expand internationally, how they communicate can greatly affect their success or possible failures. This section explores the complicated relationship between communication features and trust in international business, offering insights into how to effectively communicate and solve gaps of it, leading to stronger relationships which can help business thrive.

**Communication as a Trust-Builder.** Open communication is key to creating trustful international business relationships. According to Smith and Tahir (2021), transparency helps foster relationships and interactions between partners while making business more trustable. Genuine conversations help break through cultural or language barriers for mutual understanding that forms the base for lasting relationships and create strong loyalty bond which might lead to very successful and fruitful partnerships.

**Consistent and Reliable Communication.** Wang and Rajagopalan (2019) highlights the significance of consistent and reliable communication as part of trust-building steps, with regular information sharing can show that commitment is both sided, both partners are working towards the same goal. This is very important especially when partners are from different cultures, as it leads of less misunderstandings.

**Leveraging Technology to Strengthen Trust.** Zhao and Babin (2021) present how newly rising digital tools such as blockchain and remote communication platforms can strengthen international

partnerships by increasing trust between sides. These technologies make it easier to communicate in more efficient way and finish work faster, all in all it can lead to stronger trust bond.

Communication's value as a way of building trust extends far beyond just speaking words. It is also about how we tell and understand those messages. This means having knowledge of different culture people with different ways to communicate and do business with them. In different countries, same message can be understood in many different ways, it depends on the culture, which might lead trust each other more or less in business. While direct communication might be appreciated in certain cultures, in others indirect methods might be preferred in order to maintain mutual respect between employees. Due to cultural diversity, communication features need a deeper analyses and adaptation to meet expectations and norms of possible business partners. Showing this adaptation as possible skill can lead to fostering trust while showing respect for partners culture, which is really important for working together internationally. Overcoming cultural barriers:

- **Overcoming Cultural Differences:** According to Nguyen and Umemoto (2020), cultural differences can prevent communication from taking place and ultimately might destroy trust between two business partners. They believe cultural intelligence is crucial when managing such cultural differences, including understanding cultural norms as part of communication features that help build trust across different cultures.
- **Miscommunication Management:** Miscommunication can quickly destroy trust. Preparation is key, like hiring people who speak multiple languages or offering translation services can avoid these problems. Barnes (2018) recommends using clear language and understanding nonverbal body language as crucial elements in maintaining and fostering trust in international business relationships.
- **Adapt to Technological Developments:** currently, as seen, communication technologies advances really quickly, this leads of new challenges and opportunities creation for companies wishing to establish trust within their organisations. Businesses must have newest knowledge about the technological advancements and their changes to maintain effective communication plan, otherwise this might lead to failure which leads to gaps in the communication. By end of the day – trust will be affected too.

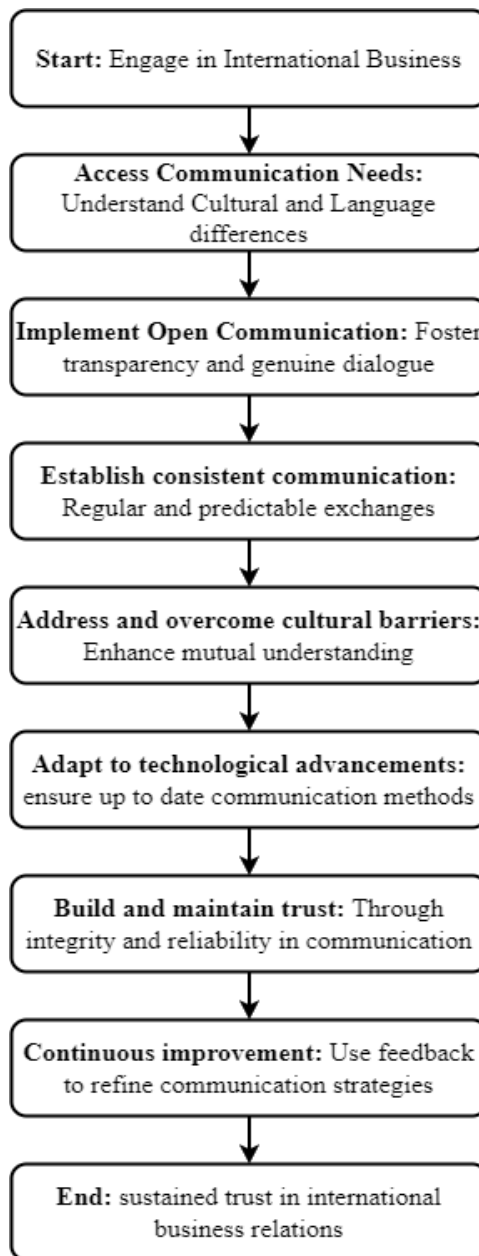
Digital communication technologies have added new steps to international business trust-building processes. These technologies led to faster and more approachable communication, offering many different ways for partners to interact. However, digital tools also rise new problems and challenges when it comes to privacy and correct information. Businesses relying more heavily on digital communication channels needs to make sure that safety factors are in place, so everything runs smoothly. Trust that used to be built through face-to-face meetings are now more started by firstly organizing remote meetings. This means companies must be perfect on communication technologies, but also be thoughtful about how they use these technologies to foster trust and not hurt it. Case studies and practical examples of these technologies:

1. Smith and Tahir (2021) provide an example of a multinational company which increased trust dramatically by adapting open communication tactic. This openness led to workers trust each other more and this also affected how their business partners view the company reputation in positive way.

2. Wang and Rajagopalan (2019) highlights the example of consistent communication to help rebuild trust after an international conflict which lead to loosing trust between partners. If any side of relationship wants to fix the connection, they need to regularly communicate with it is partner about ongoing daily stuff to gain the trust back. It is way harder than from the first time, as reputation needs to be rebuilt too. Consistency plays a crucial role in rebuilding lost bonds between partners.
3. Technological Progress and Trust: Zhao and Babin's (2021) looking into blockchain technology shows how it can be used as a part of supply chain to help create strong international relationships. It does this by offering and keeping secure records that can't be changed, faked and falsified this leading to stable quality.

Impact of Digital Communication on Trust Technology has changed how businesses communicate with each other, making it a necessity for everyday business action to build, maintain and foster trust between international partners. Zhao and Babin (2021) provide insight into how digital communication influences trust. Using newest digital tools for communicating has a crucial role of fostering trust, these tools lead more transparent, efficient and safe exchanges of communication with different countries and cultures.

Communication with people from different cultures in as essential role in building, maintaining and fostering trust in international business. Active listening, showing empathy – both can lead to overcoming cultural differences to foster deeper understanding and building stronger connection among business partners. Nguyen (2020) highlights cultural sensitivity as key aspects of international business communication features. Communication features in crisis management have in more important role as it if communication is clear, short and effective – this can calm people in chaos and deescalate the situation. After the chaos is solved – it can lead to higher chance of fostering conceptual trust. Smith (2021) point out that companies which talks directly during difficult times are more like to resolve these problems and even grow their reputation if the situation is resolved. Feedback mechanisms is an important feature which sometimes is forget by the companies. Having regular, helpful and insightful talks to collect feedback can lead to companies' growth and take a step towards strengthening trust. This is crucial when dealing in business internationally, especially in western Europe countries because of strong and long-term relationships as miscommunication can easily lead to misunderstandings and mistrust between partners.



**Fig. 1.** Flowchart for Fostering trust using communication (Zhao and Babin, 2021 and Smith and Tahir, 2021)

Flowchart seen in Figure 1 is a plan to show how different ways of communication features contribute to building, maintaining and fostering trust in international business partnerships. This chart shows a step-by-step process from start of launching business internationally to ending up for a fruitful, long-lasting relationships. It highlights the understanding of cultural and language differences around the world as key step to foster trust. Main parts of the flowchart include being open while communicating, having a consistent practice on communication. This leads to using innovative digital tools as big business part in nowadays, suggesting that technological advancements can impact the building of trust in international partnerships.

Flowchart in Figure 1 clearly highlights multiple layers of communication features in international business, emphasizing its need for nonstop improvements and feedback in improving communication features. By focusing on these important steps, this flowchart not only answers how communication

fosters trust but can serve as a step-by-step plan for international companies looking to expand it through strategic communications actions in ever changing global business market.

**Table 10.** Comparative table of Communication Techniques and their Impact on Trust in Business (Smith and Tahir, 2021; Wang and Rajagopalan, 2019; Zhao and Babin, 2021)

Communication Technique	Description	Impact on Trust in Business
Open communication	Transparency and genuine dialogue (Smith and Tahir, 2021)	Increases trust and international reputation
Consistent communication	Regular exchanges and predictability (Wang and Rajagopalan, 2019)	Restores damaged business relationships
Leveraging technology	Use of digital tools for efficient communication (Zhao and Babin, 2021)	Enhances security and trust in partnerships

In table 10, impact on trust based of communication techniques are shown. Communication features effects on trust in international business are immense and multidimensional. Effective communication is at the core of successful international business relationships, not only enabling exchange of information but also nurturing mutual respect, understanding and trust between all involved. As business increasingly becomes a global arena, communicating efficiently across cultural and digital divides will increasingly determine its success. Future research and practice should concentrate on perfecting communication features, so they are tailored specifically to international business environments. By welcoming cultural diversity, taking advantage of digital advancements, and communicating clearly and consistently across business units and regions globally, businesses can foster stronger, more trustful relationships that lead to long-term success in global markets.

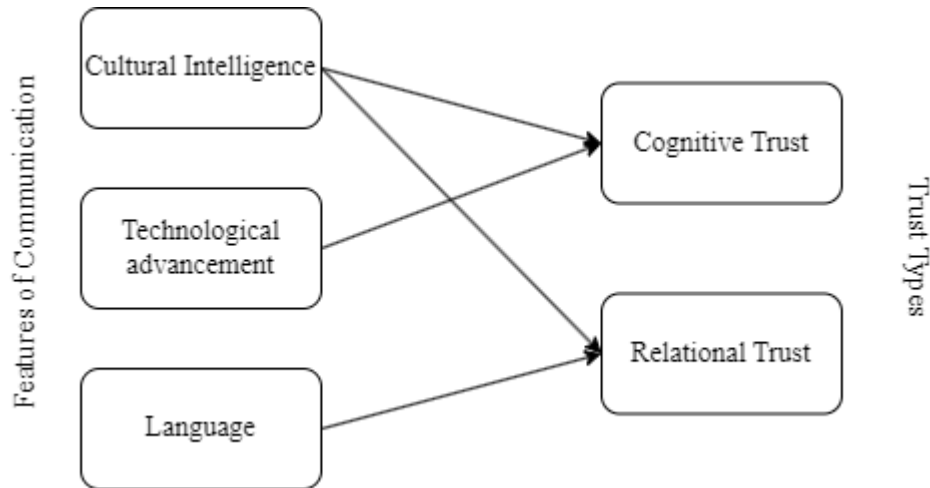
#### **2.4 The Conceptual Model of the Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business**

Conceptual models provide help explaining theories by showing how different ideas can affect each other. Trust is a key aspect to international business, especially when the world gets more connected within and markets merge into one pool, this leads of role of trust even more crucial to create a strong, long lasting and successful international partnerships.

In today’s global business economy, where different cultures connect, communication barriers are presents and markets change on a daily basis – trust is becoming more important day by day. Trust needs to not only be build but fostered too. It can be done at various stages: cultural understanding, clear communication and shown reliability are the key factors in fostering trust. This thesis’s model points out these three key steps and explains various communication features which contribute to foster trust among international businesses.

Communication features in international businesses are strongly tied with fostering trust. Effective communication involves understanding of different cultures, use technological advancements and having ways of dealing with language barriers. These three aspects have high important for successfully managing international business complexities smoothly while creating new relationships and fostering them. Conceptual model shown later on, illustrate its relationship by highlighting how trust makes communication more open and effective which in return strengthens trust between partners even more.

This study analyses two types of trust: cognitive trust – it is based on believing in a partner’s expertise and skills, while relational trust is built through emotional bonds and mutual understanding. Both types are essential for building, maintain and fostering successful international business cooperation despite all possible cultural and operational differences. This model highlights a guide how communication features and help foster trust more effectively while focusing on correct communication features. It includes insights from recent studies by Mangla (2021), Belhaj (2019) and Bourret (2018), which highlights the importance of three key elements: cultural intelligence, technological advancement and language. Having these studies in mind, conceptual model offers theoretical and practical steps to international companies on dealing with trust challenges to reach a sustainable growth and creation of competitive advantages in the global market.



**Fig. 2.** The conceptual model of the features of communication in fostering the trust in the international business

In figure 2 – conceptual model is provided. It shows the complicated relationships between different types of trust which are cognitive and relational trust as well as main communication features in international business partnerships. These factors are crucial for fostering trust in business. Conceptual model helps to visually understand the main ideas and how they connect in thesis which analysis how trust is affected by different communication features.

Conceptual model focuses on two main types of trust. Cognitive trust relies on having faith in partners expertise and reliability of their knowledge, evidence of their skills is important too (Johnson and Grayson, 2019). On the other hand, relational trust comes from emotional bonds between partners that go deeper than just skills in work. It is about forming ties through shared values, experiences and personal interactions (Miller and Sondergaard, 2020).

The model explains important aspects for key communication features: cultural intelligence, technological advancements and language barriers and how they affect trust. Cultural intelligence means understanding of different cultural norms, values, aspects and communication nuances across cultures. It is crucial when business operates in international level as it can build trust across cultural partners (Meyer, 2017). Technological advancements, especially digital communication tools, have made a revolution when working internationally by eliminating distance barriers and allowing people working together in real time (Babin, 2021). This highlights how technological integration can foster both trusts – cognitive trust through showing expertise and relational trust though easier way to communicate with others. Language barriers can lead of various challenges while operation

internationally, but they can be solved by multilingual communication, clear communication and translation services (Barnes, 2018).

The model not only explain important aspects, but the influence of trust and communication features too, as the influence is two-way. These leads of fostering trust if improvements are made to communication features, while stronger bonds and connections between partners can increase it even deeper. At they top of this connection, the final goal is to foster trust, which is crucial for effective communication in international business partnerships. However, building trust requires multiple steps in between that change and develop alongside business. This conceptual model not only highlights the important role of communication features in fostering trust between international partnerships, but also can act as a practical guide to those companies whose goal is to build and maintain strong international connections. Conceptual model outlines trust building processes within a global economy, showing a step-by-step plan for developing trust over time.

All in all, the conceptual model illustrates the important role of trust to international business. It highlights communication features which are effective communication, cultural intelligence development and language barriers solving – all play key roles in fostering trust. Model explores both cognitive trust which is based on competence and relational trust which relies on emotional connections. Those components of trust are integral parts for creating long term and efficient partnerships. By analysing and adapting insights from current studies, model showcases a two-way connection between trust and communication features that can lead to building trust. This offers a strategy for stable growth in international business avoiding the challenges of the global market.



### **3. Empirical Research Methodology in Case of the Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business**

In current times of social sciences, various researchers and analytics often raises the problems of the choice between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Both of them have their own unique advantages and disadvantages. Quantitative research is valued for its ability to access wide number of audiences from all other the world and the statistical approach of collected numerical data. It excels in cases where the goals to generalize findings across multiple different populations and multiple variables in effect. On the other hand, as its very structured approach, it can limit the depth of analysis, because respondents must be on structured path for their answers (Smith, 2021).

Qualitative research methods are complete opposite of this, they are praised for their high flexibility and depth of the analysis. This research methods allows in depth exploration of topics, particularly for topics which has complicated human behaviours and social interaction. This method usually has way a smaller number of respondents but bigger understanding of experiences, point of views and motivations in very detail. While qualitative research my not always cover as much areas and layers as quantitative methods, it gives broader and detailed understanding of human behaviours and social events that stational analysis might not be able to show and highlight (Jones, 2019).

For the research on communication features in fostering trust in international business, qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured interviews, are more appropriate and accurate. This choice is made by the need to having a deeper connection with the interviewee and not so structured approach to cover all possible topics and nuances of how communication features impact fostering trust in international business context. Quantitative methods, while being useful in analysing general, more first layers trends, lack the depthness which is offered by qualitative to approach required to understand the interpretation, cultural nuances and human practice (Taylor, 2022).

Communication in international business is affected by culture, language and strong personal factors. Trust is a complex, dynamic, shaped by personal experiences and cultural differences. Qualitative research methods like semi structured interview are one of the best options to analysing these complex human interactions and how communication features vary across different cultures. Interviews are flexible and adaptable way of collecting data, which lets researchers ask detailed questions while also finding new topics to explore if they come up mid interview. This approach leads to understanding on the personal and cultural level of influence on trust in international business settings (Brinkmann, 2021).

**Aim of the empirical research** - to investigate empirically the features of communication in fostering trust in international business.

#### **Research tasks:**

1. To identify the features of communication in the international business
2. To describe the trust in the international business context
3. To reveal the linkage between features of communication and trust in fostering trust
4. To formulate recommendations for international businesses

**Research strategy and design.** Empirical research into trust in international business employing semi-structured interviews begins by creating clear research questions designed to uncover all nuances associated with trust-building, maintenance and its effects on international relationships. Gupta (2019) showcases the design of these questions by analysing the latest done research on communication features and how they affect trust development in multi cultural layer companies, highlighting the possible challenges of people interactions within company.

Therefore, the qualitative research strategy is chosen for the empirical research for the conceptual model of features of communication in fostering trust in international business. This strategy will help to gather detailed and deep information to uncover not only which communication features are used in international business level but also how they effect and shape trust in context of long-term relationships.

Qualitative research methods provide valuable insight into complicated topics, especially in real life scenarios. The advantage of qualitative research shows even more then research topic is closely connected with other parts of society. Method offers insight into people's behaviours, their feelings, what they value and motivate them. Qualitative research method allows researchers to explore topics more deeply and in very detailed way that number-based methods (quantitative) can not (Poth, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative research strategy is selected for the empirical research for the conceptual model of features of communication in fostering trust in international business.

**Research method.** Semi structured interview is one of the most used qualitative methods because of its flexible and focused type of methodology. Guided by in advance prepared questions, but open minded enough for deeper exploration if new topics are touched during conversation. This approach lets interviewers dig deeper into the subject while letting people speak freely, making this format ideal for investigating multilayers concepts and different understandings such as trust in international business (Brinkmann, 2021). Additional and deeper research supports this method because it is high efficiently for exploration of complicated social interaction and different organization cultures which are critical aspects in understanding trust importance in international business settings (Thornberg, 2017).

The interview questions are carefully prepared to help to show fully understanding how communication affects trust in international business level. Questions are grouped in four general parts, from which each are designed to explore different nuances and aspects of communication features and trust:

1. General information – collection of basic information about the interviewee: his/her age, sex, business area, position, information about the company. These demographic questions help to connect next answers to a person's profile for easier analysis. It provides a possible foundation for deeper insights.
2. Questions about cognitive or relational trust – groups of questions which will be focusing on interviewee's perspective on both cognitive (which is experience based) and relational (emotional bond) trust. These questions will explore the point of view of how trust is built, maintained and fostered in interviewee's experience. This is a key questions segment because answers will help identify the elements which contributes the most for successful and trustful business environment from cognitive and relational trust point.

3. Questions about communication features – this will lead to questions about importance of features of communication and how they are impacting the steps of fostering trust. Focus will be on exact communication practices which led to possible positive outcomes in relation of trust. This involves both – verbal and nonverbal communication across different cultures and their nuances in international business.
4. Summarising questions – last questions to summarise main two parts (second and third) and to confirm that all the topics is discussed. This ensures that full coverage has been done of the interview questions, interviewee’s responses provided a clear picture of connection between communication features and trust and overall, no new topics emerged.

By organizing the interview questions in this way, the research has ability to methodically explain the complicated, but crucial relationship between communication features and trust in international business level. If the interview is successful – clear and actionable insights that could guide possible business actions will be indicated.

**Interviewee selection process.** Selection process of research participants was carefully done to ensure the best possible results, so all individuals had relevant experience in international business context. Interviewees are employed in international companies with experience with working across multi cultural relationships. They are managers, team leaders and professionals who are familiar with communication between different cultures and have experience of building, maintaining and fostering trust. A purposive strategy was the aspect to choose participants for the interview, they all met criteria mentioned above.

**Data collection.** Interviews were sent out few days in advance for participants to evaluate the topic of questions. Interviewing process took place in period from 2024 March 17th until 2024 April 9th. They were made using few platforms: online meetings using Google Meets, face to face meeting and phone calls. Most meetings were done via online as location for participants differ and it was easier to schedule this option. Data collection was in process until saturation was reached. This means when no new information arises, and the same general answers starts to be provided in different interviews. Confidentiality was assured, so it led to more openness and honesty from survey participants. Overall, six interviews were made, and their general information is provided in table 11.

**Table 11.** Characteristics of the interviewees

Interviewee code	Company year of establishment	Sector	Number of employees	Yearly turnover (million Eur)	Interviewee position in the company	Count of market presence
C1	2017	Renewable energy	89	6-8	Business Development Manager	7
C2	2020	eCommerce	6	1-2	eCommerce Manager	12
C3	2019	Electric cars	10	2-3	Marketing Manager	9
C4	2009	Information Technology	137	9-10	Software Testing Engineer	29
C5	1999	Information Technology	500+	275-285	Team lead	36

C6	2012	Pharmaceutical	11	6-7	Business Development Manager	11
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**Interviewee C1** works in renewable energy sector, main focus is on selling solar panels for businesses and position is Business Development Manager. Company was established in 2017 and currently employs 89 people. Company is an international as it works with clients and suppliers from 7 different countries. 2022 turnover reached in period of 6 to 8 million euros. This leads of medium size company which has connection with different cultures.

**Interviewee C2** works as eCommerce Manager in young company which was founded back in 2020. Currently it employs 6 people and yearly turnover is under 2 million euros. Currently main focus is working with 12 different countries, but almost every quarter – new country is added.

**Interviewee C3** holds a position of Marketing Manager in electric cars business which is focusing of electro mobiles chargers. Company is young too, it was established in 2019 and already reaches just under 3 million turnover per year. Currently in company works around 10 persons and they are responsible of selling and buying in 9 different world countries.

**Interviewee C4** works as Software Testing Engineer in Information Technology company. The company began it is work was established in 2009 and currently generates turnover up to 10 million euros per year. This company can be described as big one as it has 137 employees which works with clients from 29 countries.

**Interviewee C5** is a part of Information Technology company which is the oldest company from all participants as it was established in 1999. Interviewee’s current position is Team Lead of 6 persons. Overall, company employs more than 500 workers and currently generates more than 275 million euros turnover per year. Company operates in wide perspective and reaches more than 35 countries worldwide.

**Interviewee C6** works as Business Development Manager in Pharmaceutical field. Company was established in 2012 and currently employs 11 people. It has medium development in international waters as it has partners from 11 countries. This leads of turnover in between of 6 and 7 million euros per year.

**Research instrument.** Semi-structured interview was chosen as the instrument for this research. Interviewees who work in international companies were analysed by providing in total of 18 questions (see Appendix 1) which were assigned to four main groups. Those groups were general questions, then questions about cognitive and relational trust, communication features and summarizing questions. Below, broader information is provided about those groups.

**General questions** – they were created to collect main data about the interviewee. This helps to better understand some background and expertise for provided answer. After getting this information it might lead of new additional questions to analyse in the context of the interviewee experience. These questions’ main goal is to obtain an overview of the person which can be crucial when trying to understand the nuances of their answers later on. Questions were:

1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself. Your age, gender, your position in the company and main responsibilities?

2. What field is your company in? How long has it been involved in that business field?
3. Could you talk about your career journey leading up, to your job? *[Clarification question, if needed] How has your experience influenced how you approach business practices?*
4. Have you had any experiences, with cross cultural business through your work?

**Questions about cognitive or relational trust** – this group of questions had the goals to understand how interviewee understand trust and in what context. How important is trust in work field experience and what were the challenges are main focus of those questions:

1. What does trust mean to you in the context of business?
2. Can you share a real-life scenario where trust played a role in establishing or maintaining an international business relationship? What helped to improve the trust?
3. Can you share some difficulties you encountered while trying to establish trust with partners from other countries? *[Clarification question, if needed] How did you manage to resolve them?*
4. Has trust or its absence influenced the results of your business interactions? *[Clarification, question if needed] On a positive or negative scale? Did it impact any of your companies results?*
5. What signs do you consider when assessing the reliability of partners, for international business collaborations?

**Questions about communication features** – as communication is key for fostering trust, the connection in those factors were analysed by this group of questions. This led to better understanding of risen conceptual model of this master thesis:

1. There are many communication features, which are cultural intelligence, technological advancement and language. Describe your view of understanding the role of effective communication in establishing trust among international businessmen?
2. How does effective communication help foster trust in international business?
3. How do you perceive the role of effective communication in fostering trust in international business? Could you explain some instances where effective communication features have helped foster trust between yourself and your international partners? Share a few examples of some successful means that have been used to establish mutual confidence with other countries.
4. How have you handled language barriers so as to communicate clearly and effectively with one another as you are operating internationally? Give an example on how you overcome language barriers maintaining clear and effective communication while operating internationally?
5. What about cultural differences? Try to think one main cultural difference which you have come up in your field of work. How did you solve it and how did it contributing to maintaining trust? *[Clarification question, if needed] Could you provide more cultural differences which you have experienced?*
6. What has changed about your actions for building and maintaining trust in terms of digital relationships since the introduction of digital tools for communication? With the rise of digital

communication tools, how has your use of communication features for fostering trust in international relationships changed? *[Clarification question, if needed] How has global technology affected the way multinational corporations communicate in your case?*

**Summarising questions** – last group of questions were to finalise the interview and to confirm that all topics were discussed, so nothing was left behind. One of the questions was crucial for conceptual model of this topic:

1. How do you think, which type of trust has more impact on communication features in your company? Shortly about types of trust: cognitive trust – it is build based on persons professionalism and high performance as for relation trust is build based on positive interactions and shared values.
2. How do you think, to which type of trust (cognitive or relation) these three communication features are more connected? Cultural intelligence, technological advancements and language barriers.
3. Do you have additional suggestions or topics which we can include?

**Data analysis.** It was done by using special program called MAXQDA 2024. Interview data was inputted to this program and special coding, which will be described later on, was made. Program led to better understanding of collected data, had possibility to mark notes and provide visualization of the results.

**Ethical principles.** All interviewees were informed that data will be collected anonymously, and all information will be depersonalized for maximum safety. This lead of more openness in the answers and broader information. Anonymity was needed because of potential harm which could be risen from data availability on the internet.

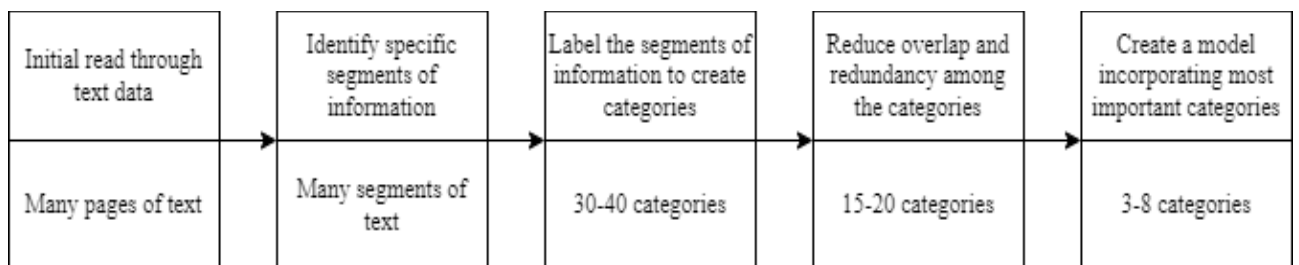
**Limitation of the study.** Selected research method of qualitative semi structured interview of 6 Lithuanian based companies was done. Initially, more interviews were planned, but they were cancelled because of not finding common time to schedule meetings. Target was to question more owners or CEOs of the companies but as these are one of the highest roles with highest working rate – it was not possible to schedule meetings. On the other hand, it was possibility to select lower tier participants to reach bigger interview count, but it was decided not to. This decision was made to have higher level managers to answer questions and form the analysis to have higher quality rather than quantity.

#### 4. The Results of Empirical Research about the Features of Communication in Fostering Trust in International Business and Discussion

Section of analysis of empirical research results displays how data from interviews is organized and analysed for the qualitative research. Specifically, to have better understanding of trust and communication features in context of international business. Using Thomas's (2006) method, the process starts from coding raw data and creating codes with their subcodes. This methodical way of summarizing data help building easier framework for interpretation of provided data. The interviews were grouped to five main categories with eighteen different subcodes, letting for a deeper analysis of the interviewee's responses. Those responses were sorted into mentioned subcodes to help understand various aspects and factors of trust and communication which are key while building, maintaining and fostering international business relationships. The main aim is to confirm the risen conceptual model in previous sections and to establish recommendations for the companies and conclusions.

**Coding of data.** As Thomas (2006) describes analysis of raw data is needed to be done in steps. Text coding steps are provided in Figure 3. As soon as qualitative research begins, the analysis must include key aspects:

- Preparation for raw data (interview transcripts)
- Data analysis
- Data grouping into categories
- Structuring those groups into higher and lower level of categories (Code > Sub Code)



**Fig. 3.** Coding process (Thomas, 2006)

Based on the Thomas (2006) example, main five groups of codes were created, those groups had 18 smaller subcodes inside them. Quotes from interviews were assigned to corresponding subcodes to better understand the provided answers from interviewees. Those quotes highlight different parts of topics connected to fostering trust and communication features. Moving forward, deeper analysis of each main group and its subcode was done. Having all quotes connected to specific categories showcases connection of risen conceptual model from previous thesis part. This leads of proving the conceptual model, forming of recommendations and conclusions.

The table 12 highlights Cognitive Trust indicators as key parts of trust in international companies. This code consists of four different subcodes which were Foundation of Trust, Consistency and reliability, Demonstrating Integrity through Transparency and Building Trust through Communication. Quotes from five different interviewees were assigned – C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5. Each subcodes highlights trust understanding from point of view of research participant.

- First subcode called Foundation of Trust analysis how interviewees understand main concept of Trust. Interviewee C1 states: *"In business trust to me means the confidence in a partner's ability and integrity"*, this indicates that trust for this person is build through experience and reliability which is connected to Cognitive Trust. Interviewee C4 highlights the transparency and accountability as foundation of Trust which is too more connected to Cognitive Trust.
- Second subcode called Consistency and Reliability states that keeping promises is not only crucial for fostering trust but is important in start of building trust too. Trust is built over time, so stability and consistency adds to fostering trust. Interviewee C2 confirms this by stating: *"Fulfil their promises and prioritize mutual interests, consistently delivering on promises and commitments builds trust"*.
- Third subcode, which is Demonstrating Integrity through Transparency, tells features of being honest, communicating openly and having full transparency with your partner are key for all three steps of trust – building, maintaining and fostering it. If company or partner wants to be seen as trustworthy and reliable – open communication should be main aspect while operation in international business. Interviewee C3 highlights that honesty was a big factor while negotiating with new partners from different cultures, this leads to new connections and business deals.
- The last subcode called Building Trust with Communication points out communication features which increases chance of successful bond between partners. It highlights the role of frequent update of situation, responding quickly and real time adaptation in different situation to foster trust. Communication using digital platforms requires person to be professional but at the same time having enough empathy towards partner. As interviewee C5 stated: *"Since the introduction of digital tools, we've emphasized transparency and regular updates to build trust. Digital communication allows for real-time interaction and quicker responses, necessitating a balance between professionalism and personal engagement in our digital relationships."* – this leads to understanding that trust building should be made through quick and effective communication.

Overall, this table gives an insight of people statements of how they understand trust in context of business, focusing on communication, experience and openness to create, maintain and foster business relationship.

**Table 12.** Cognitive Trust indicators

Subcode	Quote
Foundation of Trust	"In business trust to me means the confidence in a partner's ability and integrity. It is the foundation that enables businesses to take risks together knowing that their interests are mutually respected and protected." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Transparency, accountability, and the dedication to deliver on promises." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
	"That you will receive what is expected from the other party. And, that you will deliver what is expected of you." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
Consistency and reliability	"Fulfil their promises and prioritize mutual interests, consistently delivering on promises and commitments builds trust." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
Demonstrating Integrity through Transparency	"In my previous role as a sales manager we established an international partnership. Trust played a big role throughout the negotiation process. Key factor was the consistent and transparent communication. Demonstrating honesty and genuine commitment to the partnership helped us to establish and maintain trust in this international relationship." <b>Interviewee C3</b>



Building Trust through Communication	"Regular communication, transparency in operations, and sharing of knowledge were key factors that helped improve trust." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Since the introduction of digital tools, we've emphasized transparency and regular updates to build trust. Digital communication allows for real-time interaction and quicker responses, necessitating a balance between professionalism and personal engagement in our digital relationships." <b>Interviewee C5</b>

Relation Trust indicators are shown in table 13 below, it showcases main steps need to build trust between people from different cultures. This code has in total of four subcodes, which are Cultural Awareness and Empathy, Building Personal Connection, Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences and finally – Adapting to Cultural Differences.

- First subcode of Cultural Awareness and Empathy mentions the important of understanding different cultures and respect those differences. As interviewee C1 mention: *“Every experience has taught me how crucial it is to be aware of different cultures, know the local way of doing business and the need for practices that are good for the whole world and can last a long time.”*, without this experience building and especially fostering trust would be way more difficult in the context of business. It would be not only more difficult but would take longer time too.
- Next subcode of Building Personal Connection highlights interviewee C4 casual talks which leads to building better connection with teammates and better understanding of each other. This shows that real personal connection at jobs must be formed above normal and formal ways of communication between workers. By the end of the day, it leads for stronger relationship and trust status between coworkers.
- Then there is subcode Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences. Interviewee C2 states that: *“Sometimes we face it. For example, partners from United Arab Emirates. They are very annoying and keep messaging you often if they did not get an answer immediately. But we always try to reply politely and as quickly as possible. I guess we can say that we are adapting to the differences of foreign countries.”* This shows the vast possibilities of cultural differences while working internationally. It is crucial to have quick adaptation to those situations if company wants to succeed. As per interviewee C6 quote *“To build trust, we talked openly and tried to understand each other's cultural differences... This experience showed me how important it is to be patient and willing to understand different cultures to build trust in international business.”* – patience should be valued too. If company can be patient while negotiation – it shows their expertise and might lead to earning more respect from upcoming partners.
- Last subcode is Adapting to Cultural Differences. In this subcode interviewee C5 talked about how different cultures adapts to deadlines. It is key for mutual understanding of deadlines if common goals are needed to be reached and not only deadlines are important, but setting those common goals are crucial too.

All in all, these subcodes and quotes showcases full picture of what influences trust in each other while operating together in international business. Trust is more than just simple reliability, but it is about connection and understanding from people who comes from completely different cultures. Quotes from the taken interviews shows how people are open and flexible in upcoming situations.

**Table 13.** Relation Trust indicators

Subcode	Quote
Cultural Awareness and Empathy	"Absolutely working in renewable energy inherently means engaging with diverse markets and cultures...Every experience has taught me how crucial it is to be aware of different cultures, know the local way of doing business and the need for practices that are good for the whole world and can last a long time." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
Building Personal Connection	"We dedicated entire days to unofficial conversations. Private, without any preset agenda, to understand the challenges that each team (and each team member) faced on a personal level. We established empathy and learned to assume best intentions first." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
	"When it comes to communication within the company - I believe relational trust is more important as it helps build a deeper connection within the company thus forming a better environment for better results." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences	"Sometimes we face it. For example, partners from United Arab Emirates. They are very annoying and keep messaging you often if they did not get an answer immediately. But we always try to reply politely and as quickly as possible. I guess we can say that we are adapting to the differences of foreign countries." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
	"To build trust, we talked openly and tried to understand each other's cultural differences... This experience showed me how important it is to be patient and willing to understand different cultures to build trust in international business." <b>Interviewee C6</b>
Adapting to Cultural Differences	"A main cultural difference encountered was the approach to deadlines. We addressed it by negotiating realistic timelines, showing flexibility, and setting clear expectations, which helped maintain trust by respecting cultural norms and ensuring project success." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
	"Sometimes we face it. For example, partners from United Arab Emirates. They are very annoying and keep messaging you often if they did not get an answer immediately. But we always try to reply politely and as quickly as possible. I guess we can say that we are adapting to the differences of foreign countries." <b>Interviewee C2</b>

Communication Features indicators as code is shown in table 14. This table analysis affects of communication in business expansion, especially when different cultures and innovative technology are involved in daily life. There are in total of 4 different subcodes: Importance of Cultural Intelligence, Technological Integration in Communication, Leveraging Technology for Trust and Overcoming Language barriers.

- First subcode – Importance of Cultural Intelligence highlights the positive outcomes if respect and understanding is showed towards different cultures. Interviewee C1 stated that knowledge of those cultural nuances can show respect towards partner. Interviewee C4 adds that *"Cultural intelligence can make the other side feel valued and understood, technological advancement allows us to present more information, in a clearer and faster way."*, meaning that other party will always feel appreciated if enough respect it shown, of course, this then leads of more successful partnership.
- Second subcode called Technological Integration in Communication how new and innovative remote communication platforms can lead to fostering trust, especially within international partners. Interviewee C2 praises those tools for clear and fast communication: *"Revolution in technologies: video conferencing, email, instant messaging... This allows for more and faster communication, more friendly relationships, a better understanding of cultural differences, more understanding of what people really need, and then the relationship between partners become*

closer.". Such platforms as Teams, Zoom and similar removes walls from countries and even lessen the affect of time zones – this creates a faster path of new business connections.

- Third subcode – Leveraging Technology for Trust presents the features of technology for working at the same time towards common goals. According to interview C1 – those tools helped in business: *"Using video calls and online tools where we could work together on documents helped a lot. Everyone could see and discuss changes in real time, which made us all feel more confident in each other."* Interviewee C3 agrees and states that digital tools make sharing information a straightforward option which leads to fostering trust.
- The last subcode called Overcoming Language Barriers is about problems which rise when different cultures communicate. Interviewee C1 states that: *"Getting past language problems is important. Not everyone speaks the same language but finding ways to understand each other, like using a common language or getting help from translators, makes sure everyone knows what's being said."*, so business needs to get back through language issues, so everyone understands each other. This can be done by using simple dictionary and visualization options, as per interviewee C3. Interviewee C5 highlights that it is important to double check everything you write, to have the same understanding level: *"Double and triple check what I write and what the other party wrote"*.

All those subcodes shows the detailed communication features in today's business markets, highlighting the importance of cultural knowledge, leveraging technology into a competitive advantage and using simple words for communication. The table offers combination of those aspects if company wants to succeed internationally, while making strong and long-term business relationships around the world.

**Table 14.** Communication features indicators

Subcode	Quote
Importance of Cultural Intelligence	"Different places have different rules and ways, and understanding these can help avoid mix-ups...Next, using technology helps us talk to people far away. With things like video chats, emails, and online workspaces, being in different places isn't so hard." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Cultural intelligence can make the other side feel valued and understood, technological advancement allows us to present more information, in a clearer and faster way." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
	"In my work, talking clearly and understanding each other is really important for trust, especially with businesspeople from different countries. I've learned that knowing about other cultures, using new technology for better chats, and making sure we all understand the same language can make a big difference." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
Technological Integration in Communication	"Revolution in technologies: video conferencing, email, instant messaging... This allows for more and faster communication, more friendly relationships, a better understanding of cultural differences, more understanding of what people really need, and then the relationship between partners become closer." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
	"Technological advancement allows us to present more information in a clearer and faster way... digital communication has become far more efficient than on-site meetings and the like." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
Leveraging Technology for Trust	"Using video calls and online tools where we could work together on documents helped a lot. Everyone could see and discuss changes in real time, which made us all feel more confident in each other." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Technological advancements let us seamlessly communicate regardless of language, place, and time zone. By prioritizing effective communication, it fosters trust with partners, which leads to successful business." <b>Interviewee C3</b>

	"Using emails, video calls, and other tech tools means we can share updates quickly and clearly, making everyone feel more connected and trusted." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
Overcoming Language Barriers	"Getting past language problems is important. Not everyone speaks the same language but finding ways to understand each other, like using a common language or getting help from translators, makes sure everyone knows what's being said." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"When operating internationally, I use simplified language, for everyone to understand it, use more than usual visuals and seek for feedback to maintain effective communication." <b>Interviewee C3</b>
	"Double and triple check what I write and what the other party wrote. Make sure the language is simple and does not introduce any potential misunderstanding by overcomplicating sentences which can be written in a more simple manner." <b>Interviewee C5</b>

When dealing with people from different cultures or who speaks not in persons native language – challenges can arise, especially in beginning of building trust. These indicators are highlighted in table 15 which is called Indicators of Challenges in Establishing Trust. This code has three subcodes which are: Navigating Cultural Challenges, Cultural Misunderstandings and Creative Solutions for Language Differences.

- First sections present daily life presence of challenges while operation internationally. As interviewee C1 points out: *"I noticed a big difference in how fast decisions are made in different cultures...It was very important for me to understand and respect this difference."* – different cultures can make same decisions in completely different timeframe, and it is important to respect this for successful trust foster step.
- Second subcode, Cultural Misunderstandings, highlights how communication can be difficult, even if both sides communicate in same language. Interviewee C2 presents challenges which comes up when working with partners from United Arab Emirates. They demand immediate response and keep spamming messages until they get the reply. Adapting to this is just a required step if company wants to deal business with those countries.
- The last subcode which is called Creative Solutions for Language Differences highlights possible problem solutions to move past language barriers. Interviewee C1 states: *"Getting past the challenge of language differences meant we had to be creative and committed. We started by hiring staff who could speak two languages."* – they solved communication barrier by hiring multilingual personnel. This is smart solution for problem solving and can be taken as example for others. Interviewee's C4 company chose a bit cheaper option of using online translation tools to understand their partners: *"Though on the occasion, in my student-worker days, I've had to use online translation solutions to understand the questions from our global users."*

All those subcodes presents challenges while communicating with people internationally and how it affects trust building within companies' partners. Company must be understanding of cultural differences and find efficient ways for continuity of work despite language barriers.

**Table 15.** Indicators of Challenges in Establishing Trust

Subcode	Quote
Navigating Cultural Challenges	"I noticed a big difference in how fast decisions are made in different cultures...It was very important for me to understand and respect this difference." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Mainly difficulties in communicating all aspects correctly. Even if both parties have a high command of the language used for communication, there are still some cultural aspects that may influence the exact meaning." <b>Interviewee C5</b>
Cultural Misunderstandings	"Sometimes we face it. For example, partners from United Arab Emirates. They are very annoying and keep messaging you often if they did not get an answer immediately. But we always try to reply politely and as quickly as possible. I guess we can say that we are adapting to the differences of foreign countries." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
Creative Solutions for Language Differences	"Getting past the challenge of language differences meant we had to be creative and committed. We started by hiring staff who could speak two languages." <b>Interviewee C1</b>
	"Though on the occasion, in my student-worker days, I've had to use online translation solutions to understand the questions from our global users." <b>Interviewee C4</b>

Impact of Trust in Business outcomes is presented in table 16. This table presents importance and influence of trust in business, especially in international level. Section mainly splits to two sides – how trust can positively affect business and how it can accelerate business expansion. Overall, this code consists of three subcodes which are: Positive outcomes from trust, Accelerating Business Processes and Enhanced communication via digital tools.

- First subcode, Positive outcomes from trust, presents that trust if successfully established in partnerships can lead to things done quicker, it is confirmed by interviewee C2 statement: *"Trust is always a positive thing, as it can make work go faster and smoother. And if there's a problem, you know you'll get help and a solution."* Another positive outcome of trust is online reviews, as per interviewee C3: *"Trust for sure influences the positive results of our business interactions. For instance, positive online reviews help a lot. They show potential customers that others had a good experience with our company, making them more likely to trust us and feel more confident by choosing our company."* – when customers read positive reviews about the company, they are more likely to trust it and choose it for their needed service.
- Moving to the second subcode, accelerating business processes is about how trust can make businesses run more efficiently. Interviewee C4 believes that if trust is established – less checks and control steps are needed: *"I believe the establishment of trust allowed for a quicker pace of work. Companies without trust tend to add layers of supervision to their teams, which slows the entire process down"*. If additional controls steps are moved – it will fasten the work pace and save time for new projects.
- For last subcode called Enhanced communication via digital tools, interviewee C2 highlights how using innovative communication platforms such as Teams or Zoom can lead of building and fostering trust, because there is actual ability to see person face to face whom you are talking to. As known, human nonverbal behaviour is crucial while building, maintaining and fostering trust, especially in international business level. Interviewee C3 states: *"I can only say that since I am working, I always had an opportunity to use digital tools for communication and I could not even imagine not having these technologies now. It has been a life changer for everyone, letting people see one another face to face, talk on different time zones or geographic locations and get instant messages."* – online platforms let quickly communicate no matter in which country other partner

is or what ever time zone is present. Interviewee C5 also mentions that these digital communication tools help to keep the balance of professionalism but with personal connection as you can see person face to face. This aspect is crucial in today’s online world.

Overall, table 16 showcases the importance of trust in successful international businesses. It provides examples from multiple different interviewees about how trust can make businesses more efficient and trustable, especially if correct communication technologies are used in daily work.

**Table 16.** Impact of Trust in Business outcomes

Subcode	Quote
Positive outcomes from trust	"Trust is always a positive thing, as it can make work go faster and smoother. And if there's a problem, you know you'll get help and a solution." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
	"Trust for sure influences the positive results of our business interactions. For instance, positive online reviews help a lot. They show potential customers that others had a good experience with our company, making them more likely to trust us and feel more confident by choosing our company." <b>Interviewee C3</b>
	"I believe the establishment of trust allowed for a quicker pace of work. Companies without trust tend to add layers of supervision to their teams, which slows the entire process down." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
Accelerating Business Processes	"I believe the establishment of trust allowed for a quicker pace of work. Companies without trust tend to add layers of supervision to their teams, which slows the entire process down." <b>Interviewee C4</b>
	"Trust is always a positive thing, as it can make work go faster and smoother. And if there's a problem, you know you'll get help and a solution." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
Enhanced Communication via Digital Tools	"We are communicating more. We can meet and see each other’s faces, which helps us trust each other more." <b>Interviewee C2</b>
	"I can only say that since I am working, I always had an opportunity to use digital tools for communication and I could not even imagine not having these technologies now. It has been a life changer for everyone, letting people see one another face to face, talk on different time zones or geographic locations and get instant messages." <b>Interviewee C3</b>
	"Digital communication allows for real-time interaction and quicker responses, necessitating a balance between professionalism and personal engagement in our digital relationships." <b>Interviewee C5</b>

**Interviews analysis using MAXQDA 2024 software.** Interview analysis was done to explore complicated dynamics of trust in international business interactions. MAXQDA 2024 software was chosen as tool to do this analysis. Through thematic coding of selected quotes from interviews, it is possibility to show research visually in frequencies and distributions of each code and subcode. This leads of better understanding of which part is more related to risen conceptual model in previous part. Total of five codes were assigned to understand main features of communication in fostering trust in international business.

The figure 4 presents code analysis which was made using MAXQDA 2024 software. Codes were created from main points found in interviews for master thesis research. There are five main topics in the table: Cognitive Trust, Relation Trust, Communication Features, Challenges in Establishing Trust and Impact of Trust in Business Outcomes. These topics are across in 6 different interviews, ranging from C1 to C6. The size and colour of quadrants in the table shows how often each code was assigned to specific interview. The bigger and brighter the quadrant – the more topic was touched, and the smaller and darker quadrant is – it has the least quotes from interviews. As seen in figure 4, main

code with 40 mentions across interviews is Cognitive Trust. This leads to understanding that most interviewees feel the closest to understanding of Cognitive Trust. Second place is taken by Communication Features with 27 quotes from the interviews. These results conclude to a close connection of Communication Features to Cognitive Trust, and it is related to risen conceptual model from previous section. In third place there is code of Challenges in Establishing Trust with 21 mentions. New problems and challenges rise when company expands, especially in international market level. Getting past them is crucial for successful and efficient company growth. In last two places there are codes of Relation Trust and Impact of Trust in Business Outcomes, they respectively have 19 and 18 mentions. Analysing this data makes a conclusion that Relation trust has less connection in case of international business and Cognitive Trust model should be the key focus aspect. On the other hand, only 18 mentions of impact of trust in business outcomes show that trust, at least based by interviewees, does not have too much impact for business.

Now changing aspect of analysis from importance of codes to importance of interviews, it is seen that interviewee C1 provided most insights on selected topic. In total of 26 quotes were selected and coded towards the topic of the features of communication in fostering trust in international business. Second and third place is allocated to interviewees C5 and C6 – they both got quotes 24 times. The rest three interviewees, C2, C2 and C4, have 18 or less mentions, so main insights are influenced by first three places. Interviewee C1 main quotes from code Cognitive Trust, this leads to understanding that this person basis his trust on partners who can show experience and reliability within work framework. Interviewees C2 and C3 does not have the outstanding code as quotes are split in between all five codes. Interviewee C4, same as interviewee C1, mainly focuses on Cognitive Trust and states that trust should be build through experience, overall, this interviewee has all most no challenges while establishing trust as on 1 quote got selected from whole interview. Interviewee C5 highlights the importance of Cognitive trust, but also presents the challenges in establishing trust while operation in international level as quotes had the same amount of number. Interviewee C6, same as C1 and C4, presents main focus on cognitive trust, which got 12 quotes. Overall, it is clear that businesses must focus on cognitive trust if they want to establish their company internationally. Experience and reliability are key while creating new partnerships.

All in all, figure 4 combines all interviews to better understanding of trust and the way companies uses communication features to their advantages. Each column separately shows the number of mentions of different topics and total number adds up to 125 points. Figure highlights most important aspects of trust and at the same time presents the connection of communication and trust. This chart is crucial for further research process, it gives clear overview of all interviews and deeper understanding how to foster trust in the international market level.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
> Cognitive Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	40
> Relation Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	19
> Communication features	●	●	●	●	●	●	27
> Challenges in Establishing Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	21
> Impact of trust on business outcomes	●	●	●	●	●	●	18
Σ SUM	26	18	16	17	24	24	125

Fig. 4. Distribution of Primary Codes in Connection to International Business

Going deeper into each code, first one is Relation trust (see figure 5). This code consists of four smaller subcodes which are: Cultural Awareness and Empathy, Building Personal Connection, Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences and Adapting to Cultural Differences. Relation trust is connection and bond build trust type, so it is crucial to understand all possible cultural nuances for relationship to be successful. Getting deeper to the subcodes:

1. Cultural Awareness and Empathy – it is about understanding and being kind to people from different cultures. This leads to creation of new relationships, building, maintaining and fostering trust. Interviewees C1, C3, C4, C5 and C6 were assigned to this subcode and in total of six quotes were selected. Most important one being interviewee C1 which showcases it is skills and knowledge in cultural understanding.
2. Building Personal Connection – this subcode came up only three times and mainly in interview C5. As the number of quotes is low, it is needed to state that people think only having personal connections would not lead to good relationship or high trust status. There are more important criteria while fostering trust.
3. Valuing Diversity and Cultural Difference – similar to previous subcode, this subcode is a weak one, because it was mentioned only four times and only in three interviews out of six. It is seen that people are not like to value correctly the diversity and cultural differences or do not think that it has any impact on trust in international business level.
4. Adapting to Cultural Differences – same as Cultural Awareness and Empathy, this code has biggest impact to code of Relation Trust. Six quotes were selected in five interviews out of six. It indicates the importance of quick adaptation to possible challenges while operating internationally. Especially interviewee C6 highlights the importance of this factor because it has double the quotations than other interviewees.

Overall, it is seen that interviewee C6 is mostly connected to code relation trust as it has in total of six quotes selected and the least numbers were 2 quotes from interviewees C2, C3, C4 – all those people do not think that Relation trust is too important while operating internationally. Main factors to reaching Relation trust, people highlighted the adaptation to cultural differences and cultural awareness. They both got six mentions across the interviews and the lowest impact is through building personal connections with 3 quotes.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
Relation Trust							0
Cultural Awareness and Empathy	●		●	●	●	●	6
Building Personal Connection				●	●		3
Valuing Diversity and Cultural Diffe	●	●				●	4
Adapting to Cultural Differences	●	●	●		●	●	6
Σ SUM	4	2	2	2	4	5	19

**Fig. 5.** Coding of Relation Trust in the Context of International Business



Results shown in figure 6 are from code Challenges in Establishing Trust. In it, it is the analysis of how people or companies struggle with risen problems then they try to foster trust, especially when people from different cultures and countries connect. This code has three different subcodes which represents most popular problems or their solutions possibilities:

1. Navigating Cultural Challenges – this subcode has clearly the biggest impact of the main code as it has even eleven mentions across the interviews and main one being C5. It highlights how people try to deal with problems which come up when different cultures try to work together. Navigating Cultural Challenges is the most common feature to face while operating in international business level.
2. Cultural Misunderstandings – this subcode has only 5 mentions across the interviews. It seems that in nowadays people have formed the knowledge of cultural differences and misunderstandings are not so common as before. That is because people are more connected to more countries with the help of new communication technologies.
3. Creative Solutions for Language Differences – same as previous subcode, it is mentioned only 5 times. Mainly on interview C1. As per interviewee C1 their company used many of creative solutions for solving challenges while establishing trust. Those solutions are to use translation services, hiring staff who speaks multiple languages and communicating mainly in English.

All in all, challenges while establishing trust will come up while working internationally. It depends on the company if they will manage to solve them efficiently and quickly. It is clear that navigating through cultural challenges is a key feature while trying to build trust between people from different countries. As per interviewee C1 – creative solutions should be used to lessen the outcome of those challenges. Those creative solutions can be translation services or innovative use of communication technologies.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
Challenges in Establishing Trust							0
Navigating Cultural Challenges	●	●			●	●	11
Cultural Misunderstandings		●			●	●	5
Creative Solutions for Language Di	●			●	●		5
Σ SUM	6	2	0	1	6	6	21

**Fig. 6.** Coding of Challenges in Establishing Trust in the Context of International Business

In the figure 7, Cognitive trust is shown. Cognitive trust is the kind of trust based on peoples experience and dependability. This is not just about someone being friendly or having strong connection, but it is about whether people trust in their skills and reliability. This trust type removes emotional bond, and it is fully based on capability and action. It is the confidence which you feel when you know that your partner is good at what they do, and they will use their skills for your both benefits. The figure 7 analysis conversations about the cognitive trust and it is divided to four smaller subcodes: Foundation of Trust, Consistency and Reliability, Demonstrating Integrity Through Transparency and Building Trust Through Communication:

1. Foundation of Trust – it is the main feature of trust. It was the most mentioned subcode, reaching 15 quotes. It is the core qualities or factors about someone to show them as trustworthy in front of others. Interesting note, that all of interviewees were assigned to this code, but mainly interviewee C1 stands out with 5 quotes. It is clear to say that interviewee’s C1 company and himself, has deep and correct understanding of Trust in international business.
2. Consistency and Reliability – people do not think that consistency is too important for trust as it was quoted only six times. It might be an affect that skills are needed to be shown first and then reliability is evaluated. Of course, all factors add up to fostering trust, especially in today’s ever-changing market.
3. Demonstrating Integrity Through Transparency – transparency is seen as a must and even standard while operating in international business. It might be the case why not too much of interviewees spoke about the transparency as only six quotes were selected. Even though it might be looked as standard, there is still a need to nourish transparency through all levels and layers within the company.
4. Building Trust Through Communication – no surprise that communication is selected at the top rates of quotes, in total of 13 times in all interviews. This only highlights the importance of communication features and their affect on building, maintaining and fostering trust within international businesses. It is not only what is being told and communicated, but it is about how it is done too.

Overall, Cognitive trust has stronger impact within company boundaries based on interviewees answers. Especially communication influences those results. It is good note that all interviewees understanding the foundation of trust and adapt it within their businesses. This code takes up in total of 40 marks out of full 125, so it confirms that the cognitive trust is the foundation of successful business partnerships. Based on this information, companies should focus on employee’s experience to highlight their skills as this will lead to potential new clients if they will trust their show expertise of their company.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
▼ Cognitive Trust							0
● Foundation of Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
● Consistency and Reliability		●	●	●	●		6
● Demonstrating integrity through transparency		●	●		●	●	6
● Building Trust through Communication	●		●	●	●	●	13
Σ SUM	9	5	6	7	6	7	40

**Fig. 7.** Coding of Cognitive Trust in the Context of International Business

Coding of Communication Features are presented in figure 8. Communication Features is one of the main steps if company wants to foster trust. There are plenty of choices to choose from: digital platforms, cultural intelligence and nonverbal language. As it is seen in the figure, all subcodes have similar distribution across interviews. All detail description of subcodes:

1. Importance of Cultural Intelligence – in total of six quotes were assigned to this subcode showing that interviewees notice cultural intelligence, but do not highlight it as crucial one. Having cultural intelligence means that company understands how to adapt to different cultures, as in one country the same thing might be understood in a completely opposite way while working in another region. Mostly interviewee C3 expresses cultural intelligence importance as his company is working with partners from United Arab Emirates who have their unique communication style and cultural nuances.
2. Technological Integration in Communication – total amount of quotes was the same as previous code, there was no highlights from interviewees as it was distributed evenly in all interviews. Even distribution leads to conclusion that technology is a must when communicating and it is not dealt as some priority, just a common to have thing.
3. Leveraging Technology for Trust – even though technological integration did not show signs of crucial need of this, but leveraging technology for trust is opposite. In total of nine times quotes were selected, showing the need of leveraging technology if company wants to have successful partnership. Interviewee C1 states that communication platforms and translation services led to more new relationships in international level.
4. Overcoming Language Barriers – same as first two subcodes, this one was mentioned six times. Mainly in interviewees C2 and C5. Language barriers are going to be less each year as new technology are being presented to solve this problem, such as artificial intelligence real time translators, people learn more of common languages, such as Spanish or English.

Code of Communication Features in total has 27 quotes which show low impact in overall picture. It means that communication features are needed, but they are treated as normality and a common thing to have in international business relationships. There is a clear need of technology if company wants to leverage it for trust based on interviewees answers. As even diversification is seen in all subcodes – companies need to work on every aspect of communication features.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
Communication features							0
Importance of Cultural Intelligence	●		●	●	●	●	6
Technological Integration in Comm	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
Leveraging Technology for Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	9
Overcoming Language Barriers	●	●	●		●		6
<b>Σ SUM</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27</b>

**Fig. 8.** Coding of Communication Features in International Business

Impact of Trust on Business outcomes is coded to three different subcodes which is seen in figure 9. Trust can impact business in both ways: positively – new clients can use companies’ services if reviews are positive, negatively – if not enough of cognitive trust is seen by possible new clients, they might be scared off and will not choose your service. Deeper analysis of highlighted subcodes in relation of impact of trust:

1. Positive Outcomes from Trust – similar as last code, all subcodes are evenly distributed across the interviews. It means that positive outcomes from trust are influenced equally as other two subcodes – accelerating business processes and enhanced communication via digital tools. Main advantages of trust are found at interview C2. Respondent presented that trust leads to jobs done quicker as smaller amount of control steps are needed. This is a win-win situation as one side saves time on control and other side is happy that they are being trusted. Cognitive trust is more presented in those situations.
2. Accelerating Business Processes – time saving is crucial in today’s market where everything is changing quickly, and employees are overloaded. It is similar thing from first subcode – trust can lead of goals reached faster and in more efficient way. Interviewee C4 highlights the importance of communication platforms to communicate with remote workers not only via emails but with face-to-face online meetings too.
3. Enhanced Communication via Digital Tools – interviewee C5 presents digital platforms in their companies’ daily work which is Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Their company organises at least few meetings per day using those platforms to connect all employees from different countries. It is interesting thing to note that interviewees whom companies operate in more markets are more quoted more in this subcode, rather interviewees whom companies operate more in local markets do not value digital tools for communication.

All of those aspects have similar importance and impact based on collected interviews as it is seen that all subcodes has the same number of six quotes across the board. Number of quotes indicates that those factors of trust are considered normality and a must when working across various multinational scenarios. In total of 18 occurrences are seen in this code and this tells that acknowledgement of trust is a significant aspect for business efficiency and success, especially while working with partners across the world.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
Impact of trust on business outcomes							0
Positive outcomes from trust		●	●	●	●	●	6
Accelerating Business Processes	●	●	●	●		●	6
Enhanced Communication via Digital Tools		●	●	●	●	●	6
<b>Σ SUM</b>	1	4	3	4	3	3	18

**Fig. 9.** Coding of Impact of Trust on Business Outcomes

In figure 10 all codes and subcodes of done interviews are presented. Table gives insight into what companies’ employees see as important when it comes to trust and communication features, especially if company is operating in international level.

- Main focus is seen on Cognitive Trust code which is based on experience and reliability. All six interviews presented at least few quotes from taken interviews, main ones being interviewee’s C1, C4 and C6. Interviewee C1 highlights the importance and high level of understanding in foundation of trust. Business relies on a lot of Cognitive Trust, as from it – first steps of building of trust are done. Only later Relation trust can be seen when bond between partners is started to

be made. On the other hand, such subcodes as consistency and reliability did not show up too much and has low impact in impact of cognitive trust. This might be the case because businesses expect that those things are already there and present, no further actions are needed to be done. They are like basic rules of work life that everyone should be following anyway.

- Moving to Relation trust it seems that making close bond with partners are seen as positive thing, but it is not a main focus which are done by businesses. Instead, workers focus how to adapt to different cultural nuances in each country, rather than building personal connections. This is because in today's business, everyone wants to be treated respectfully, so they have to be thoughtfully of about all kinds of different people which they meet while operation internationally. Personal connections can be a good add on for overall relationship, but not the criteria to focus from the beginning.
- Talking about code of Communication Features it is seen with mediocre impact in overall table as it collected in total of 27 quotes out of 125. Important to note that all of interviewees had to add something about this code, so it seems that companies use communication to foster trust in their daily work. Especially innovative technologies such as virtual meeting rooms and artificial intelligence translators have crucial impact for communication within and outside companies' circle.
- Section of Challenges in Establishing Trust analyses how to deal with people from different cultures as working internationally raises problems in almost every step of the building a relationship. This code has hardly focused subcode in Navigating Cultural Challenges. Interviewees C1, C5 and C6 presents it as key aspect to solve if company wants to succeed to foster trust within business. Other two subcodes, Cultural Misunderstandings and Creative Solutions for Language Differences, are there, but they do not have so much focus from respondents. It might be the case because companies already found ways to solve them, and they are not focused so much anymore.
- Overviewing the last code called Impact of Trust on Business outcomes it is seen that companies seem to care equally to all subcodes within – Positive outcomes of Trust, Accelerating Business Processes and Enhanced Communication via Digital tools. Companies do not focus on one priority but split their resources to enhance all aspects to reach the best possible result for their company. Especially after pandemic COVID19 period, companies implemented all possible digital tools and in nowadays they are not seen as a miracle, but more as a standard feature of the company. This leads for higher standard of trust within relationships.

Code System	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUM
▼ Cognitive Trust							0
Foundation of Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
Consistency and Reliability		●	●	●	●		6
Demonstrating integrity through transparency		●	●		●	●	6
Building Trust through Communication	●		●	●	●	●	13
▼ Relation Trust							0
Cultural Awareness and Empathy	●		●	●	●	●	6
Building Personal Connection				●	●		3
Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences	●	●				●	4
Adapting to Cultural Differences	●	●	●		●	●	6
▼ Communication features							0
Importance of Cultural Intelligence	●		●	●	●	●	6
Technological Integration in Communication	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
Leveraging Technology for Trust	●	●	●	●	●	●	9
Overcoming Language Barriers	●	●	●		●		6
▼ Challenges in Establishing Trust							0
Navigating Cultural Challenges	●	●			●	●	11
Cultural Misunderstandings		●			●	●	5
Creative Solutions for Language Differences	●			●	●		5
▼ Impact of trust on business outcomes							0
Positive outcomes from trust		●	●	●	●	●	6
Accelerating Business Processes	●	●	●	●		●	6
Enhanced Communication via Digital Tools		●	●	●	●	●	6
Σ SUM	26	18	16	17	24	24	125

**Fig. 10.** Detailed interview coding system

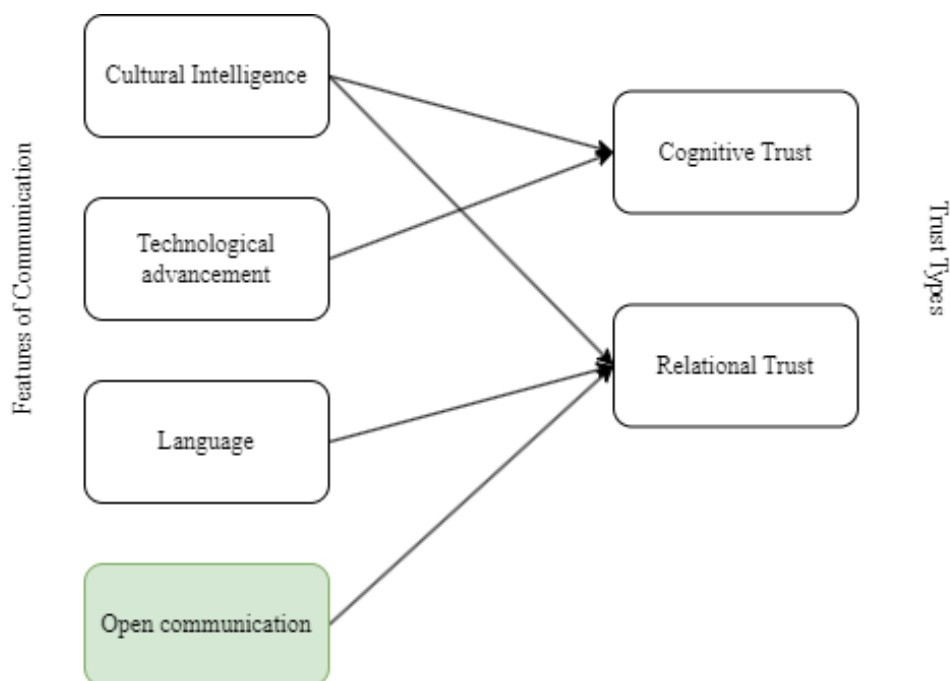
Summarising, the total of 125 quotes were mentioned which shows how trust and communication features plays big part of business success. Companies understand that trust is not only a needed criterion, but something that can change the total success of the company. Employees must present their experiences so clients can use cognitive trust to be more secure about their choice of the company. Cultural intelligence let's not only to have successful relationship but overall to be treated with respect and understanding.

**Research results on conceptual model.** Conceptual model presented in section 2.4 showcased how communication features (cultural intelligence, technological advancements and language) are impacting two types of trust (cognitive or relational trust). After analysis of interviews, it is clear how selected communication features work in real world situations. Interviewees shared their experiences of how they build, maintain and foster trust in their companies. This is mainly done through open and

clear communication which is done by using technologic advancements in efficient way which connects to the risen ideas in the conceptual model. Key findings from interviews were these:

- Cognitive and Relational Trust: data collected through interviews added more depth to the conceptual model between those two types of trust. Interviewees answers stated that cognitive trust is build by expertise and skills, so technological advancements and cultural intelligence are more connected to this type of trust. While relational trust which is based on relations was more impacted from shared cultural intelligence factors and language.
- Technological Advancements: the interviews showcased the crucial role of technology if company wants to have more efficient communication to foster trust. Digital tools let to overcome language and regional barriers which leads to building stronger connection in cognitive trust by presenting experience.
- Cultural Intelligence: interview participants repeated more than four times that cultural intelligence plays important role in the complicated context of international business. People work experience showed and strengthened conceptual model’s focus towards cultural intelligence as key aspect while developing both types of trust – cognitive and relational trust.

All in all, semi structured interviews delve deeper to insights and examples from real world practices that expanded and strengthened conceptual model which was provided in section 2.4. Answers from participants confirmed the relevance of the model for fostering trust in international business. One additional communication feature stood out – open communication. Based on six different interviews, open communication was mentioned in all of them, and it was connected to relational trust as key factor to build trust through connection. Personal connection can be built, maintained and fostered only if both sides are equally open with each other. Even though, sometimes hard truth can be harder to accept at first, but in a long-term relationship – it will for sure help to create a stronger bond. After this feature was analysed, conceptual model was updated, and it is seen in figure 11.



**Fig. 11.** Updated conceptual model after done research

**Interviews findings on connection to theoretical section.** After semi structured interviews analysis was done, stronger connection between risen theoretical concepts in previous sections is now seen to the empirical findings.

- Cognitive and Relation trust – according to Johnson and Grayson (2019), cognitive trust is solely based on recognizing of partner’s experience and skills. On the other hand, relational trust develops through common experiences and emotional connections. Findings from interviews confirms these understandings of two types of trust. Interviewees stated that they trusted their business partners based on their professional experience (connection to cognitive trust) and their personal features from emotional connections (connection to relational trust).
- Technological Advancements – Zhao and Babin (2021) stated that technology has crucial impact on helping in removing barriers in communication and making trust deeper for people across huge distances. Interview participants showcased the same things by highlighting video calls, instant messaging as key factors for open, clear and efficient communication which leads in fostering trust in international business.
- Cultural Intelligence – Meyer (2017) stated that cultural differences understanding is important factor if company wants to reach clear communication and long-term relationships. Findings from interviews strongly supported this as they noted the importance of cultural awareness and steps in building, maintaining and fostering trust.

Overall, majority of theoretical methods were confirmed by done research method analysis. They showcase acknowledgment of partners expertise, the use of efficient technology and respecting possible cultural differences which can arise when working in international level. Theories which were provided in first sections of the thesis are shown as not being just academic level but are also seen in real world experience.

**Recommendations.** To improve further research and highlight important focus aspects for international businesses, recommendations were showcased below. These tips focus to reach long-term understanding trust impact towards international business and can help businesses foster trust between their relationships.

For further scientific research:

1. Long term and industry specific studies – there is also a niche to find a long-term effect of trust in international business. Researchers could follow how trust changes when people interact for longer period of time, if technologies have the same impact as in the beginning of trust steps. There is also a need of adaptation to specific field of businesses. As companies need not only to adapt to cultural differences, but also to their specific working field. So, researchers could study what different communication features are needed to reach either cognitive or relation trust in different fields.
2. Impact of innovative technologies – technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain will not leave existing markets and will only be used more in daily life. This leads of important need of study towards them and their effect of trust in international business. Businesses should know how to use those technologies advantages to only expand a company and not to hurt business relationships.



For international businesses:

1. Creating opportunity to cultural training and use the technology efficiently – all employees from international companies must have high understanding of different cultural nuances. Company should be responsible to have opportunity to train their workers to have this knowledge. This not only would help to foster existing relationship but showcases good knowledge from new possible partners point of view. Using various technology solutions, such as video calls and instant messaging can help people connect efficiently and no matter in which location they are.
2. Clarifying and adapting communication rules – especially bigger companies should have clear rules of communication within and outside the company. Those rules must consider possible different culture nuances and they should be taken into an account. Rules are not only need to be in place, but they should be regularly rechecked and updated if needed. This adaptation will lead to highest communication standards which clients and partners will value.
3. Open and honest communication – clear communication in the company should be main focus and key aspect for smooth operation. Information sharing should be open and honest, even when it is hard to do so. This will lead to people being on the same page, reaching common goals and removing possible misunderstandings. Overall, stronger and longer-term relationships will be built this way.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This master thesis deeply analysed how different communication features and cognitive and relational trust interact in today's international business. The detailed conclusions from the thesis are showcased from four key research objectives:

1. The done research reassured that trust is crucial in international business, even though it is very complicated. Trust is formed by various factors which are cultural intelligence, technological advancements and communication barriers. Trust is a must thing to have in efficiently running company and it is not just a simple result of successful cooperations, but a crucial criterion that impacts various strategies and steps of international business partnerships. Biggest trust challenges arise from various cultural differences and misunderstandings that are the result of bad communication and missing of knowledge. This leads to conflicts and problems that will negative impact business dealings and company's reputation. Understanding of trust and how it works is key while operating internationally. The thesis showcased trust's strategic role in business expansion leading to more efficient and long-term cooperations.
2. Communication features have key roles in building, maintaining and fostering trust in international business. This thesis examined the most important aspects of communication, such as openness, consistency, cultural intelligence and the use of technological advancements. Those aspects were analysed how they effect the step of fostering trust. Effective use of those features provides a significant reduce of various misunderstandings within and outside companies, building a stronger foundation of trust beside partners and new possible business opportunities. Furthermore, the more frequent use of different technological advancements for communication has had also big impact in fostering trust. These technologies lead to wider transparency and effectiveness in partnerships, which are crucial while building, maintaining and fostering trust in ever changing international business markets. Cognitive trust is based on people experience and skills, it depends on their expertise as an expert in their field. Possible new clients evaluate if company has enough of experience in comparison of their competitors and choose accordingly. Cognitive trust is influenced less by emotions but mainly on facts. On the other hand, relational trust is built through personal connections. Connection can be built through sharing common experience and goals. People trusts companies who shows the understanding of their challenges and communicate openly.
3. For this thesis methodology, qualitative analysis through semi structured interviews was used. It helped to dive deeper to understand how trust and communication features work together while fostering trust in worldwide business. Qualitative method was chosen to have broader answers with real life experience from people in various industries towards fostering trust. The information which was collected highlighted strong relation between communication and trust and helped to understand key features that impact trust the most. Analysis was done using MAXQDA 2024 software where transcribed interviews were coded to see biggest impact towards risen problems.
4. This thesis thoroughly explored the influence of communication features in context of trust in international business. Highlighting differences on dimensions of cognitive and relational trust. After analysis was done, main impact of communication features towards mentioned trust type were found:

- Cognitive trust: research confirmed the risen conceptual model in section 2.4, showcasing the importance of cultural intelligence and use of technological advancements. Advancements for communication, such as video calls, instant messaging and artificial intelligence were mainly mentioned during interviews which showcases the importance of those factors in company level. Companies must focus on those advancements, and it will lead to successful, long term and both sided relationships. Insights of the research indicated that cognitive trust is affected mainly by showing expertise as competent company. It is advised that international businesses should invest to new and innovative technologies to create possible competitive advantages. Furthermore, communication rules should be established within the company to have a clear and common understanding of similar goals of employees.
- Relational trust: after research analysis was done, one more key communication feature was found – open communication. Findings from done research indicated the openness and transparency as crucial factors to creating long term relationships. Relational trust is mainly built through shared experiences and personal connections which comes from both sided willingness to share information openly and in real time. Interviews highlighted the training in cultural intelligence as the important advantage to have well prepared employees. Employees are company’s image and representation, so they need to be prepared for all possible cultural challenges.
- Impact of Communication Features on Trust in International Business: cognitive and relational trust integration using effective and focused communication strategies leads to a clear structure of the company which can lead of new partnerships in international business level and fostering current relationships. This integration is needed to avoid possible challenges which will arise from different cultural differences. Companies should focus on developing and enhancing various communication features to align with dedicated trust fostering goals within the company. Those features should not only be in place, but they should be overviewed on regular basis to avoid any new emerged features to not let competitors catch new competitive advantage. Additionally, feedback is crucial for efficiently working mechanism, so there should be a system to collect feedback from clients or partners towards reaching ideal structure of communication within and outside the company to be able to adapt to ever changing international markets.

All in all, after done thesis it is clear that strategic development of selected communication features can drastically increase the good impact of trust in context of international business. By developing both types of trust, cognitive and relational, businesses can foster their current partnerships to reach efficiency and wanted results.

### **Recommendations.**

For further scientific research:

1. Long term and industry specific studies – deeper investigation towards long term impact of trust in international business and how trust changes through extended interactions, particularly giving focus on new emerging technologies which are applied to industry specific features in communication for achieving better status of cognitive and relational trust.
2. Impact of innovative technologies – research impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain on trust in international business. Finding advantages of these technologies to expand business without a risk of complicating relationships.

For international businesses:

1. Cultural training to ensure all employees have experience in cultural nuances and can use offered advantages of technologies like video calls and instant messaging to have effective communication to foster current relationships and create ways for new partners.
2. Communication rules should be established and they should be updated on regular basis. These rules need to evaluate possible cultural differences and have correct approach towards them. This will lead to high communication standards which will be appreciated by clients and partners.
3. Open and honest communication will lead to a transparent and healthy partnerships to align to common company goals which will reduce possible misunderstandings and create long term partnerships.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview Protocol

Information about the interviewee (sex, age, position in the company, company field):

Date and location of the interview:

Introduction to interview: Hello, my name is Tomas, I am student from Kaunas Technology University known as KTU. I am doing research of my master thesis theme on „The Features of communication in fostering trust in international business“. This interview will be fully anonymous and data will be used only for internal analysis purposes. Participating here is voluntarily and you can stop the interview at any time.

- General questions:

1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself. Your age, gender, your position in the company and main responsibilities?
2. What field is your company in? How long has it been involved in that business field?
3. Could you talk about your career journey leading up, to your job? [Clarification question, if needed] How has your experience influenced how you approach business practices?
4. Have you had any experiences, with cross cultural business through your work?

- Questions about cognitive or relational trust:

1. What does trust mean to you in the context of business?
2. Can you share a real-life scenario where trust played a role in establishing or maintaining an international business relationship? What helped to improve the trust?
3. Can you share some difficulties you encountered while trying to establish trust with partners from other countries? [Clarification question, if needed] How did you manage to resolve them?
4. Has trust or its absence influenced the results of your business interactions? [Clarification, question if needed] On a positive or negative scale? Did it impact any of your companies results?
5. What signs do you consider when assessing the reliability of partners, for international business collaborations?

- Questions about communication features:

1. There are many communication features, which are cultural intelligence, technological advancement and language. Describe your view of understanding the role of effective communication in establishing trust among international businessmen?
2. How does effective communication help foster trust in international business?
3. How do you perceive the role of effective communication in fostering trust in international business? Could you explain some instances where effective communication features have helped

foster trust between yourself and your international partners? Share a few examples of some successful means that have been used to establish mutual confidence with other countries.

4. How have you handled language barriers so as to communicate clearly and effectively with one another as you are operating internationally? Give an example on how you overcome language barriers maintaining clear and effective communication while operating internationally?
  5. What about cultural differences? Try to think one main cultural difference which you have come up in your field of work. How did you solve it and how did it contributing to maintaining trust? [Clarification question, if needed] Could you provide more cultural differences which you have experienced?
  6. What has changed about your actions for building and maintaining trust in terms of digital relationships since the introduction of digital tools for communication? With the rise of digital communication tools, how has your use of communication features for fostering trust in international relationships changed? [Clarification question, if needed] How has global technology affected the way multinational corporations communicate in your case?
- Summarising questions:
    1. How do you think, which type of trust has more impact on communication features in your company? Shortly about types of trust: cognitive trust – it's build based on persons professionalism and high performance as for relation trust is build based on positive interactions and shared values.
    2. How do you think, to which type of trust (cognitive or relation) these three communication features are more connected? Cultural intelligence, technological advancements and language barriers.
    3. Do you have additional suggestions or topics which we can include?