

Relationship in Business is like a Family

Gertrude I. Hewapathirana
University of Minnesota

Abstract

While many SMEs fail, some SMEs achieve success in international markets through bonded relationships. Using a phenomenological approach within the qualitative case study research premise, this study attempted to find how Sri Lankan SME owner-managers initiated, built, and maintained successful business relationships. The lived experiences of ten successful Sri Lankan SME owner-managers are that they form relationships with business counterparts and such relationships are like a family. Thus commitment to do excellence in international business is ensured by extending love, care, family values and norms to business counterparts generating mutual advantages. The implications for theory, policy, and practice are given.

Key Words: SMEs, business relationships, internationalization, lived experience, phenomenology, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The concept of business relationship though is not a new phenomenon (Brown, 1950), the increasing body of literature shows that it is gaining attention as an important strategic component of internationalization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in today's dynamic global business environment. Business relationship is used as a synonym for friendships between business organizations or persons. A review of literature reveals that there are two dominant schools of thoughts about having bonded business relationships between SMEs. One school of thoughts suggests that business relationships/friendships between organizations bring many advantages over competition; thus, collaboration is emphasized as an important business strategy in today's global economic environment (Allan, 1979; Halpern, 1997; Johnson and Selnes, 2004; Reohr, 1991; Ohmae, 1989; Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998; Zain and Ng, 2006). The other school of thoughts suggests that friendship in international business can possibly create conflicts

due to role expectations and cultural differences, thus citing culture, personal roles, and individuals' expectations are as hindering factors for cross-national business relationships (Grayson, 2007; Heide and Wathne, 2006).

Business relationship is also viewed as an outcome of both formal and informal network formation within and between businesses. In many instances, cross-national friendship formation has become a crucial factor for SMEs. Premarathne cites Rebellottie's claim (1995) that informal relationships are as "*solidarity networks* helping enterprises to survive beyond market forces would sustain" (Premarathne, 2002, p. 64). In the process of networking entrepreneurs have to enter into network relationships with other entrepreneurs/parties in his business as well as in his external environment because the main problem for small business is not being small, but being lonely (Premarathne, 2002; Rebellottie, 1995). However, cultural and linguistic differences, attitudinal or ideological mismatches, and lack of knowledge about other countries, products, people, and resources have become sources of friction, inefficiency, and waste of resources (Freidman, 2005).

It is noted that many researchers discussed relationships between organizations ignoring the person-to-person relationships between owner-managers of SMEs in internationalization process limiting their discussions to the antecedents and consequences of friendships of businesses-to-businesses. Previous research mainly used quantitative surveys and therefore it is doubtful about gaining a tacit understanding of the topic. More over, those research findings were limited to western countries and or multinational corporations. The emerging enthusiasm to study business relationships prompted me to further investigate this phenomenon using a phenomenological approach to explore deeply how business relationships are initiated, built, and maintained by successful SME owner-mangers in Sri Lanka. The subsequent sections of this

paper includes a review of literature, theoretical framework, context of the study and participants, and the findings followed by a discussion and implications for theory, policy, and practice with a guide to future research.

The Purpose

This research focuses on identifying how successful Sri Lankan SME owner-managers achieve success in international business to generate new knowledge of the best practices and effectiveness of human relations in international business. The primary purpose is to identify how bonded business relationships were initiated, built, and maintained and what values were more prominent in sustaining them. It explores the nature of relationships that made success in international business. Next, a comprehensive literature review lays the foundation for this study.

Literature Review

Business Relationships as a Positive Factor for Internationalization of SMEs

Those who presented positive aspects of business relationships used varying approaches and theoretical frameworks to enhance further understanding of this topic. SMEs that were limited to domestic markets are forced to be internationally competitive to sustain in today's rapidly changing global business environment because "previously protected infant industries are no longer receiving protection from direct competition with foreign products" (Zain and Ng, 2006, p. 183). The attention was drawn to the fact that while many SMEs are fading away, some SMEs are functioning successfully in today's global market by retaining international customers, suppliers, and collaborators (Beaman, 2002; Hewapathirana, 2008). In this endeavor, Webster (1992) stated that new organizations are now replacing simple market-based transactions over to business relationships; irrespective of the size of the organizations, business relationships have been viewed as an essential strategy for surviving in the global economy (Ohmae, 1989).

Resource based view suggests that relationships can impact on mobilizing resources among alliances. Williams, Han, and Qualls (1998) noted that SMEs find business relationships are important to share risks and resources to survive in today's dynamic business environment. Organizations form relationships when a firm needs additional resources that cannot be purchased via market transaction and cannot be built internally with acceptable costs (risk).

A knowledge based theory of business relationships suggests that inter firm collaboration between alliances provide the best context for creating value by exchanging or combining dispersed knowledge. "Firms that face high environmental uncertainty especially can utilize alliances to enhance and speed organizational learning, reshape their environment and reduce strategic uncertainty" (Hoffmann and Schlosser, 2001, p. 359). Bliezner and Adams (1992) emphasized that friendship in business encourages a safe environment for discussing concerns and issues, which facilitate the generation of new viewpoints that promotes understanding. Such an understanding developed through sharing honest opinions provides a conducive premise for cooperation (Krackhardt and Stem, 1988) and members in friendships can have greater influence to each other member (Bliezner and Adams, 1992). Their view is that when members are more cooperative, they can be more tolerant of disagreement among members (Torrance, 1957). Relationship is thus viewed as a way to avoid cognitive conflicts between partners.

In the same vein, inter-organizational relationship theory and trust perspective (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) suggests that knowledge gained through honest exchanges of viewpoints and collaboration enhance interpersonal and interorganizational trust and commitment. Trust established through personalized relationships leads to increased understanding of international business partners and building trust (Ohmae, 1989; Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998). Likewise, knowledge building through person-to-person relationships is found to be the ground for establishing trustworthy relationships that has become the bonding glue for sustaining in international business.

A transaction-cost theory perspectives states that close relationships between SMEs keep the cost down because business dyads in relationships can help each other to reduce costs. Formation of business relationships between firms has been identified as a growing global trend to expand markets by word-of-mouth marketing through business dyads (Harrigan, 1988). The dynamics of the global business environment is forcing for collaboration rather than competition in order to survive by sharing risk and resources while cutting down costs.

A managerial perspectives of business relationships suggests that the success of cross-national business relationships is determined partly by the appreciation and understanding that each country partner has of the other's social as well as structural bonding requirements and expectations (Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998). It is more likely that Asian-Pacific Rim are focused on establishing social requirements of relationships between the organizations as a prerequisite for establishing and maintaining business relationships while American firms rush to contractual agreements to establish business relationships. It is found that developing countries have business relationship success rate of 45% to 50% (Killing, 1983). Williams, Han, and Qualls developed a conceptual model based on social and structural bonding as antecedents to relationship performance measured by commitment. In their model, commitment is a manifestation of business relationships. Managerial approach is based on the notion that culture is an influential force in shaping managerial attitudes and practices of doing business (Williams et al (1989). Interpersonal orientation in business relationships and the role that culture plays in influencing these relationships is the definition of culture. Culture is an important force determining managerial attitude and practices; it influences the practice of management and is considered an essential tool for understanding the process of doing business. Williams et al (1989) used culture as a descriptive variable in business relationships to measure culture's

impact on relationships. Relationships generate both affective and task bonding (Scherer, 1972). Such friendships would promote interpersonal processes associated with desirable decision-making outcomes. Over time the association between friendship and the outcomes of interest is therefore likely to be reciprocal rather than unidirectional (Schweiger, Sandberg, and Rechner, 1989). Friendship, therefore is considered as an antecedent to effective decision-making in business.

Business Relationships as a Negative Factor for Internationalization of SMEs

Cultural distance and role conflicts have been argued to be the hindering factors for international business relationships (Gayson, 2007). Cultural distance is identified as an obstacle in successful performance in cross-national business relationships because the norms and values of two firms differ due to their separate national characteristics that exist between partners (Ford, 1984; Geringer and Hebert, 1990). Park (1991) noted that although a large number of cross-national relationships are structurally and contractually sound, they have been reported to be organizationally unstable and performing poorly. According to Hofstede's (1979) notion of individualism and collectivism which characterized how individuals interact with one another, it is critical to understand the role of culture in business marketing, and maintaining cross-national relationships (Clark, 1990; Rubin and Brown, 1975; Samli, Grewal, and Mathur, 1988). They further state that a society that values individualism is one in which the ties between individuals are very loose. A society that values collectivism is one in which individuals are expected to look after each other, thus, they are more people oriented. Similarly high interpersonal oriented societies are highly responsive to interpersonal aspects of relationships with others, whereas low interpersonal oriented societies are just the opposite.

Research Framework

Though some researchers pointed out that business relationship is usually occur between business-to-business focusing on organizations, Hewapathirana (2008) after researching a sample of ten highly successful SMEs doing international businesses in Sri Lanka found that initially, relationships are built between the owner-managers or the decision makers of SMEs. Once relationships are imitated, formed, and maintained over time, these personal relationships are transformed into their organizations. It is also found that in the Sri Lankan context; in general, the key decision maker is the owner-manager of respective SMEs. Therefore, based on the assumption that initiation of business relationships are fundamentally occur between person-to-person interactions, the following research framework is chosen. This research also assumes that interpersonal orientation of owner-managers influence cross-national business relationships. However, it is noted that a lack of research relevant to international business relationships between owner-managers of SMEs, it limits comparison of research findings in different geographic locations.

On the premise of social capital theory, interpersonal relationships are discussed in relation to the concepts of bridging and bonding (Halpern, 2005). Interpersonal bonding is seen as a positive outcome of person-to-person relationships. Bonding is conceptualized as structural bonding and social bonding (Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998). Social bonding is used a synonym to social relations (affiliation, cooperation, socialability etc.) and structural bonding is similar to task orientations. Social bonding also refers to personal bonding (Turner, 1970). That means individuals in organizations are bonded based on personal and social relationships with their international business counterparts. In this process, trust and satisfaction play a major role in developing social bonding. Based on their bonded relationships, dyads become enmeshed in

social networks of the other and their relationships become more binding, stable, and predictable (Dwyer et al, 1987). Trust and shared values due to social bonding made dyads become interested and committed to providing satisfactory business activities. Dyads when they become bonded through social relationships, they tend to be committed to each other to maintain satisfactory relationships. Wilson and Mummalaneni (1986) argue that greater the stability of a relationship, greater the chance that the duration of relationship will be longer, thus, interpersonal orientation is discussed as the foundation for successful relationship building and maintenance. Williams, Han and Qualls (1998) stated that individual are more likely to commit to a relationship with another individual by interacting on an interpersonal level that leads to social bonding and thereby enhance their commitment to people and business organizations. Having this theoretical understanding, this study addressed a gap how bonded relationships were initiated, built, and maintained by the Sri Lankan SME owner-managers. It is my hope that this research enables us to understand the nature of relationships and the values that prompt them to maintaining winning business relationships with many dyads from western as well as eastern countries.

Study Context

This research is carried out in Sri Lanka, a developing country in Asia. Since there is no specific study that distinguishes fine differences in Sri Lankan culture, I used Hofstede's (2001) classifications of national cultural differences in creating background knowledge about the culture specific behaviors of Sri Lankan people. According to Hofstede's research, South Asian countries are classified as high context cultures that have hierarchical social systems and collectivistic relationship behavior. Sri Lanka been a part of South Asia, it is assumed that it has cultural characteristics similar to those of its neighbor—India. Sri Lankans generally are

considered a friendly and hospitable nation as they appreciate other cultures and are open to creating relationships with strangers.

Method

Based on the purpose and the nature of the research question, a phenomenological approach within a multiple case study method was chosen to find tacit data of lived experiences. The overarching research questions addressed in this study was “how were the international business relationships initiated, built, and maintained by the Sri Lankan Small Business Owner-managers? and what they value in business relationships. A case study research permits qualitative inquiry, which is particularly oriented toward exploration and discovery (Patton, 2002). Using an inductive analytical framework, general behavioral patterns, values, and lived experiences were studied.

Research Participants Selection

Ten successful SME owner-managers who have been in international business were chosen using a purposeful sample method that allows selecting information rich cases (Yin, 2003). The logic and power of the purposeful sampling is its ability to select information-rich cases to gain an in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002). Rigorous process of participant selection was carried out after an in-depth research of news paper archives, internet research, and consultations with business advisory and development organizations in Sri Lanka to ensure the selection of information rich participants. This process also used to maintain the validity, credibility, and reliability of the research. Thus, ten participants—five males and five females who apparently were the best fit for my selection criteria—provided extremely rich information.

The key determining factors were, they should have ongoing successful international SMEs either export/imports, or joint ventures in countries other than their own country of

residence, willingness to provide rich information, continuity of international business minimum of ten years because “time is an inherent feature of a relationship, and consequently time is a significant aspect when conceptualizing and empirically studying relationships” (Holmlund, 2004, p. 280). Because a business relationship is a dynamic multifaceted process, we should focus on long-term relationships instead of short-term episodes in order to understand the true nature of relationships (Holmlund, 2004). The other determining factors were each manager should have more than one international business dyadic relationships and have frequent interactions and English or Sinhala language ability to communicate with the researcher.

The participants ranged in age from fifty to eighty years. Their experience in doing international business varied from fifteen to forty years and employment from 30-3000. Each of them has experience in doing business with minimum of ten countries in Europe, Asia Pacific countries, and America. All of them have had sustaining international business relationships with their clients and business partners. All the participants have won the Sri Lanka’s Best Entrepreneur Award for their excellence in doing business within and outside the country. In addition, three of them have won the Best Exporter Award, and three women have won the World’s Best Woman Entrepreneur Award. One woman won more than twenty awards for excellence in her business. Thus, the selected ten SME owner- managers have all been socially recognized as successful and great contributors to the economy. All the participants played two key roles as the owner and the manager in their businesses. They have been portrayed as role models and leaders in business in numerous media within and outside the country.

Data Collection

Using a phenomenological approach to learn from lived experiences, I collected data from face-to-face in-depth conversations with each participant. After getting their consent, set

times to meet each participant at his/her own businesses and residents in a comfortable and confidential manner. The grand opening questions (Mores and Richards, 2002) were used to initiate conversations. The opening invitation began with “I am interested in what it like to have close business relationships with partners from other countries, please tell me about your experience.” Probing of unstructured spontaneous queries allowed the interviewer to follow the participants lead with clarifying questions. The interviews were audio taped with minimum interruptions and field notes of prominent points were written for later retrieval. Each interview lasted three to four hours during December 2006 and January 2007.

To ensure the rigor of this study, the research principles proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied. The principles are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility, the interviews were conducted in the participants home or business premises confidentially. References were made and participants were educated about the purpose of the research before hand to develop confidence within the participants. Friendly atmosphere during interviews was a remarkable signal for collecting trustworthy data that ensure the credibility of the study. The author’s professional experience functioned as a guide to keeping the phenomenon in focus by being aware and constantly asking analytic questions “what is the lived experience of business relationships.” Like wise Giorgi’s (1985) analysis steps were performed rigorously to maximize the credibility and dependability. Confirmability is ensured by using participants own words in the transcripts to illustrate the findings.

Analysis

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim and read several times to ensure the completeness. The initial analysis was performed using Giorgi’s (1997) phenomenological analysis method. Giorgi (1985) suggested four steps of analysis. First step was to gain an overall

understanding by reading and rereading the entire transcripts. The reader did it with an open mind without taking any direction to gain global understanding. The second step was breaking the text into meaning units. This process allowed generating several meaning units expressed by the participants' own words. It helped to remove the unrelated texts to the phenomenon studied. This procedure was performed to each participant's interviews. The meaning units were treated as expressions related to the lived experience of having close business relationships to understand the nature of relationships. The third step was to examine, probe, and transform each meaning unit of the participant's own words into the author's disciplinary language. This process helped separate essential aspects of the phenomenon studied. The fourth step was devoted to reveal the essential structure and to synthesize the essence of the phenomenon into patterns of the essences. Finally, a synthesis of all interviews was arranged to clusters of variation of the essences of the phenomenon. In this process, one main essence and three related essences emerged from the transcripts and later several constituents that illuminate the essences were found. Thus, the emphasis was to present the central aspects of the interviews and illuminate the lived experience that highlighted how they initiate, built, and maintained bonding international business relationships.

Findings

The major essence that gives a global understanding of how these participants initiated, built, and maintained business relationships is that "relationship in business is like a family." The three related essences surrounding the major essence: "relationship in business is like a family" depicts their values as "money is not the prime concern", "do the best, give the best, tell the

truth” and “continued friendship means continued business.” Each essence is described with examples drawn from participant’s own words with my interpretations.

Major Essence: “Relationship in Business is Like a Family”

The main essence related to the phenomenon “cross-national business relationships” was identified as “relationship in business is like a family.” There has been an established pattern of lived experience that all the participants have been doing business through established relationships with their clients and business partners. Those relationships were identified similar to family member relationships. In the literature, a family is seen as a nuclear unit that functions as a hierarchical organism with a set of family bound values and systems.

Family is considered as a nuclear system in which family members develop invisible loyalties and generational bonds due to genetic relatedness. Family, thus, develops hierarchy of obligations or a multigenerational balance sheet of merit and indebtedness, which has tremendous impact on individual members (Hartman and Laird, 1983, p. 80).

Though the concept of family is changing according to different cultural patterns over time, still in many cultures, the unit of family becomes a powerful authority in continuing relationships, sharing resources and values, keeping strong family bonds, love, and caring for its members while transmitting generational values and cultures (Hartman and Laird, 1983).

It is understood that intimate relationships within family members play a vital role in shaping the lives of its members. In the same manner, once each research participant has initiated contacts with strange business partners and clients, they made an effort to develop bonding relationships. Such desire for bonding friendships was apparent from the interview transcripts. Each one of them expressed their loving and caring nature to their employees, clients, business partners, and others. Every effort was made to strengthen bonds between business partners and clients as they believe such friendships will help their business success by avoiding opportunistic behaviors. It is the participants’ experience that friendships can bring mutual gains through deeper

understanding of each other and serving business encounters as family members or friends. This has been evident.

I experienced that personal friendship is the best way to get export orders. I had some friends from other countries. When they come to Sri Lanka, I invite them for dinners and take them around the country for site seeing... That is one way I built up relationships.

This has been further evident with participants' own words.

Who ever who comes to my door, I welcome them with a smile...I am a very friendly person and they...my friends, neighbors like it. Many people from other countries came to me through our website... When they come, I get friendly with them. I get very close to friends who ever who comes to me. When I go to France, I stay with my clients as we become very friendly as brothers and sisters.

Reciprocity and hospitality were identified as important constituents of the major essence "relationship in business is like a family." Business relationships were further strengthened through extending reciprocity and hospitality to their encounters. Once they initiate business talks with a new client from another country, many a time, they organized frequent meetings, fun activities, and enjoyable trips to extend their friendships. Relationship with business partners is considered a part of day-to-day lives and part of their family entertainments. Though business expansion was the ultimate outcome, each participant emphasized their concern about maintaining credibility and excellence in relationships. Reciprocity nature and appreciation of friendships were demonstrated by all the participants as they enjoy such mutual exchanges. Gift giving, hosting business partners' family members, and socializing with business partners from other countries were evident throughout their interviews. Such type of reciprocal behavior demonstrated their appreciation towards business partners, which draw partners more closely. Another described his experience:

When I go to other countries, my friends (business partners) take me around and invite me for trips and so on...In return I also organize things that make them

happy and enjoyable to do business with me. I always build up close friendship with my business partners... It is both ways, we help each other through personal relationships and family relationships... It is mutually inclusive.

Relationship is seen positively as important component.

Confidence building is the key to successful international business...through friendships we build up confidence...we became friendly...When we go to their countries they host us and take us to their factories and when they come here we host them and show our factories and places of interest and build up friendship... I stick to ethics and do the job properly, that is how we build up good relationships with international businesses. It is very important for us.

Their loving and caring nature towards employees, clients, business partners, and others lead to building bonded relationships. By extending invitations to their business partners from other countries to their homes and family events, these participants have combined self and family values for initiating in-depth relationships with their business partners. In the Sri Lankan context, hospitality is a societal value that is inherited over generations. All those different levels of values—self, family, and societal values—blended together in their relationships through their actions of hospitality and reciprocity. Another stated how her family entertained international business partners while gaining deeper understanding about them.

From my childhood I have cross-cultural experience and open mind to meet international people. Through friends ... We had many international visitors who came to my father's business. He used to take them around the country showing interesting places... We all go as a family with them... I had that exposure to outsiders...I developed contacts with them too... That way, I understood the other people and their circumstances and lives... We were very happy to take them around the country ... it was my father's hobby than a business...that way we had good relationships with many international people.

Family mentality in doing business is further evident through the following expressions.

My daughter visited the magic show in Las Vegas and found a friend... She participated in LA business show... She met the buyer there... Then he agreed to buy from us... We have exhibited a company in LA with that buyer... We have employed some people... We pay for his travel and he delivers to other buyers at

their door step for us... It became a family base relationship now. When we visit the US, they pick up us from the airport and help us to find accommodation and travel around... We have a good relationship now with our US buyer. We also supply to British buyers in the same way.

Family like relationships generated multiple effects: generated business ideas, deeper knowledge, resources, motivation, expanded markets, and cost savings over marketing efforts are some of them.

Because of our friendship with some of my husband's friends in other countries, we started our business. He got a loan from his friend and started the business (financial support, and ideas for business)... We do not need to meet the buyer directly every time because we have already established relationship and friendship... Our buying officers are already there and they know about us. (Knowledge creation and trust establishment). Our friends who know us give recommendations to their friends and their friends so that we get a lot of orders through word of mouth because we have friends who know us and our business and we have built trust with them. That trust and friendship can go as a chain that made success of our business... and our business is good and easy to grow or supply to different markets. Trust depends on the history and our behavior or supply to meet the needs of our friends in time. So it needs to understand the other party, their business, and needs.

Taking responsibility and accountability was emphasized in family like business relationships. All the participants demonstrated high level of accountability as they were responsible for their actions and decisions. Unlike in large corporate businesses, they did not have to wait to get approval to take decisions due to established friendships. Instant decision making ability is one advantage that SME managers have in dealing with international business dyads.

Empathy, affection, and caring nature towards business partners were important constituents apparent in family like relationships. The data analysis provided ample evidence that effective use of empathy in international business relationships was helpful in maintaining bonded business relationships. Empathy is understood as understanding and sharing of feelings

such as kindness, sincerity, authenticity, concern about others, and compassionate nature of persons lead to developing mutually beneficial relationships. Sri Lankans in general are known as hospitable, sincere, and caring people. Such national cultural characteristics were apparent within all the participants as they demonstrated their caring nature towards their families, employees, friends, neighbors, business partners and others. All the participants treat their international business partners cordially as close family members. Their day-to-day practices were that “we treat our business partners and clients as our family members.” “Friends are no different.” This caring nature facilitated deepening their understanding about the other parties which made them easy to deal with business activities.

Effective use of personal emotional characteristics (affective—feelings) in initiating and maintaining international business relationships was found as an important essence in relationship building. Affective feelings are considered a personal quality and an ability to feel and share in another’s emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Close friendship was developed being frank and honest with the other members. All the participants demonstrated their ability to understand another person's culture, perspectives, likings, and so on. Having greater understanding of the dyads, these participants were able to persuade easily about their products and businesses which lead to achieve business goals simultaneously by strengthening friendships.

“Money is Not the Prime Concern”

Money is not the prime concern was emerged as an important essence because earning higher profit is expressed as a temporary gain by the research participants. It was a global understanding that these participants viewed doing international business as part of their day-to-day family life rather than solely earning profits. Maintaining trustworthy relationships are given

priority and considered as a way to continuity of their international businesses. As a result, they tend to maintain friendships by adhering to unique business philosophies and ethics, maintaining credibility and quality in all aspects of business and life. Doing international business was considered a pride and higher social status for them. Helping others and getting help from others were some of the outcomes that further strengthen their business relationships and trustworthiness. These essences were apparent from their own words as given below.

Money should never be the prime concern. You must develop your own personality and help others.. my neighbors are my customers, my employees are my children...I treat equally to both my own children and my employees which made my success as they are committed to work...I also love my neighbors and I feel my business is secured that way. My neighbors are my customers and they are my marketing agents because they spread the good word about my products.

Each participant demonstrated eagerness to develop close networks with business partners by opening to different viewpoints and respecting others. Psychological readiness to adapting a holistic approach to relationship building with international business partners was a prominent personal attribute. It was the participants' idea that sustainable business relationships cannot be formed having only personal qualities or high quality products or a good business. It has to be a holistic approach leading towards relationship orientation. Business relationship is seen a totality approach and integrity in what you do is paramount.

Asian culture values networks and relationships; family background, knowledge, and credibility. Those factors are important for small businesses. However, there should be a face behind the brand helps a lot... A lot of small businesses go from word of mouth to build business...Every thing is critical unless you put the right things together, such as product; quality; marketing and all those things affect the success.

It was their understanding that relationship building although is extremely useful in business, it may not bring fruits if it is used in isolation. All other factors related to product quality

standards, timely delivery, packing, and many characters of personality need to be blended together to achieve success. Thus, a holistic approach to business and relationship building that intertwined with open-mindedness was observed among all the participants.

“Do the Best, Give the Best, Tell the Truth”

Another important essence of “doing business like a family” was apparent through their desire and commitment to maintain excellence. It was found that participants’ commitment for excellence has one of the major contributing factors for the sustainability of international business relationships that made their business partners satisfied with business transactions. High commitment to give the best, do the best attitude combined with caring personalities further strengthened their trustworthy relationships. The constituents such as high concern for quality in all actions and products and timely action was apparent from the interviews. All these participants demonstrated their keenness to maintain good image and reputation. They were concerned about their achievements and credibility rather than short-term monetary gains. Every one of them implied that they would like to maintain their self-respect as part of credibility. Each one of them created unique images for themselves as well as their products and services. Building positive social identity and credibility were apparent as key constituents that supported bridging partners. Their positive social identity, self-dignity, and ethical behavior blended together formed a unique flat form that strengthened their relationships with business partners. Their strong motivation, self-dignity, reputation, and image were apparent from their personal behavior and actions towards relationships. Maintaining personal and business credibility by supplying high quality products in time for a reasonable price and extending authentic friendship to their business partners were their norms. Such unwritten norms made them behave differently

and do things in such a way that dyads become confident. Their concern about maintaining positive image can be seen as

One thing is my product. It is the Sri Lanka's best brand name in batik today. I have been exporting to Germany, Sweden, France, UK, USA, and various countries.

The essence of “do the best, give the best” was further reflected in their high concern for maintaining quality. It was their effort to supply quality products as one of the key strategy required to succeed in international business. Quality is not limited to their business or products or services it is also linked to relationships. Such concern for quality in their relationships is evident by way of extending candid and friendly nature to their business partners. Such actions helped them to create unique brand names. For example, “my product is the Sri Lanka's best brand name in batik today.” He is concerned about maintaining the quality and brand name of his products just as he is concerned about his own credibility.

Taking prompt actions is identified as an important constituent of “do the best” because it strengthens the relationships between business dyads while ensuring future orders expanding their businesses internationally. They sent all the shipments as agreed maintaining confidence within the business partners. Their priority concern was that they do not want to destroy their good name of business as well as their personal credibility and relationships.

Another constitutes of “do the best, give the best, tell the truth” are honesty, and integrity that built confidence with new business friends. Each one of them acted with a clear vision of how to deal with dyads. Their inner values were displayed as:

“We conduct business with honesty and integrity with respect to those who are in relationship with us... We comply with the law and regulations in Sri Lanka with regard to exports...Assurance of quality, price, employee training, and their well being, and to conduct all business activities in an environmentally friendly manner are our prime goals...Give to people only what is good and necessary... Teaching the truth...knowing

the subjects... understanding the others [business partners] are the key things to business success.

The participants' values, inner concerns, honesty, and integrity of serving and dealing with their international business dyads were demonstrated through out the interview transcripts.

“Continued Friendship Means Continued Business”

It was their inner belief that business success is ensured through the continuity of family like business relationships. Strong friendship was considered a hope of continuing business with international counterparts as it is a way of predicting for future orders and behaviors of business partners and customers. Friendships are also seen as a way of avoiding opportunistic and deceptive actions as they experienced in the past. There were three deceptive incidences. One participant lost millions of rupees as one of her buyers deceived her by not paying for a shipment of goods and she has to take legal actions to secure her payment. Another experienced cheating by one of his international buyers by sending him substandard machinery. He sees that deeper understanding of his buyers through close relationships would have avoided such deceptive actions. Another experienced his patent was stolen. Based on their experience, building bonded relationships would avoid deceptive actions was deeply rooted in their minds.

If you build confidence and a close friendship with your business partner, it makes a lot success and it will make a big difference in doing business with them... Once you build close friendship, they will never go to another person, or your competitor to buy things... You also try to give them the best product, best price, best quality, and best of all.

Thus, building sustainable business relationships were seen as the continuity of business and avoidance of deceptive actions.

It was also observed that personal and business relationships were intertwined, hence inseparable. Interestingly, to all the participants profit was not the only motive of having close

business relationships with international business partners. For most of them, relationships with their business partners become part of their family lives and family social status. Sri Lankans, as a nation in general value hospitality to strangers as a valuable opportunity and a satisfying behavior in their lives. To all the participants, a successful business relationship means the continuity of international business by way of continuous orders for their products or services. Returning customers is also seen as a sign of success in international business relationships.

Frequent travels, technology such as e-mail, faxes, and telephone were used to have frequent interactions with their business dyads. When relationships become intimate and bonded friendships, the frequency of interactions increases and most of them recorded that they get more frequent orders through emails or phone calls. Once a family like friendship is established, time factor is not much of a concern as some business partners give orders overnight or to supply within a short period of time. Family like relationships is thus seen as favorable as they received continuous export markets.

My overseas friends are my business partners; they call me in the evening and ask me... whether I can send them my product within two days. They also send me designs via email. I say yes and I some or how the other manufacture the required quantity and ship the consignment the following day or the other day morning... I am used to it and I like it... That way, I get frequent orders... They know that I will do it and send them in time... I never delayed any shipment or quantity or lowered the quality... It is the trusting relationship built between us that made my business success... I should say our business success is due to our close friendship and understanding of each others capabilities.

Likewise, all the participants viewed relationships as an important factor for small businesses that helps internationalize their SMEs. Once they become closer, each party makes frequent visits and that relationship becomes more family-to-family relationship. Another constituent identified was that their strong belief about helping others and getting help from others as they feel comfortable with their business partners as family members.

Making their business dyads happy by extending personalized welcome, hosting, and providing excellent services were considered part of maintaining quality relationships. They avoided every minute thing that may conflict or lower their credibility. Business growth was achieved through entering into new markets, expanding existing markets, adding innovations and technology, and augmenting resources among international partners. Many international friends helped these participants by giving feedbacks and new ideas that lead to adding new features to their product innovations. Technology was used not only to production and design but also to communicate and share new designs while maintaining bonded relationships.

Discussion

The findings of this study guide my argument in a direction that family like business relationships were initiated through person-to-person relationships between owner-managers (decision makers) of SMEs and overtime, such relationships extended to their business organizations. It is apparent that social bonding becomes a prerequisite and a foundation for structural bonding. Both social and structural bondings (Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998) are important for ground for achieving success in international SMEs.

The unique findings of this study were that cross-national business relationships between international dyads were like a family. Thus, person-to-person relationships were apparent preconditions for organization-to-organization relationships. Therefore, organizational relationships were seen as a longer term outcome of the owner-managers' personalized relationships with international business partners. This study emphasizes that in the Sri Lankan business context, owner-managers' cross-national business relationships play an important role in internationalizing their SMEs and therefore, personalized relationships were viewed as positive factors for international business success. The lived experience made them believe that bonded

business relationships opened many doors for them to enter into international markets while collaboratively enhanced their products, quality standards, innovative designs and augmented resources. That way, these participants were not only able to expand their markets but also establish joint partnerships and manufacturing plants in many countries.

Evidences show that many business dyads had family involvements in bonded relationships with business counterparts. Those family involvements become an enjoyable and memorable life and family events which worked as bridges to building strong psychological bonds. That way, they were able to gain deeper understanding about their dyadic business partners and clients. It was the participants' understanding that whenever, they did not have clear understanding of their business partners' they failed due to deception and untrustworthy actions by strange business counterparts. There were incidences that three participants became the victims of deceptive actions and non payment for their consignments. These deceptive actions were ended with legal sanctions to recover their losses while completely terminating future business activities with those deceptive business partners. Therefore, friendships with business partners are seen as the way to gain deeper knowledge and build trustworthy relationships to sustain in international business environments. The lived experience shows that their family values were embedded into business relationships and such relationships guide them as a predictor for future actions of business dyads.

Though the concept of family is changing according to different cultural patterns over time, still in many cultures, the unit of family becomes a powerful authority in continuing relationships, sharing resources and values, keeping strong family bonds, love, and caring for its members while transmitting generational values and cultures (Hartman and Laird, 1983). It is obvious that intimate relationships within a family play a vital role in shaping the lives of its

members. It is a common norm that family relationships are not solely based on profit motives. The essence that “money is not the prime concern” is grounded in the Sri Lankan family values as they envision goodwill of their family members. What it means by “money is not the prime concern” in this study is that each participant believed that friendship is more valuable for them than instant profits, thus integrating family values into the business decision making process. Thus, relationship building is viewed as a part of their social relationships with family like businesses partners. These findings raised another important factor that finding like-minded, family like business partners is not an easy process especially in culturally different nations; it is crucial and rare. It is apparent that a few bonded relationships were sustained over time based on their past actions are the foundations for continuity of relationships as well as businesses.

The commitments to give the best, do the best, and be a good friend were some of the ethical practices thus observed within these participants. These relationships lead to form important social capital among these business partners. Social capital refers to “features of social life-networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives...social capital in short refers to social connections and attendant norms and trust (Putnam, 1995, pp. 664-5). Initially, ethical practices of individuals are an important component of relationships that worked out positively sustaining in relationships.

Over time, trustworthy personal relations formed between dyads were translated into their organizations in the form of economic returns by boosting their SMEs through market expansion, innovations, product developments, augmenting resources, and establishing brand names. In the same vein, previous researchers supports my findings that those who concerned with social capital is that when harnessed, social capital generates economic returns (Coleman, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995; Halpern, 2005). Because of the established trust in relationships, common

frames of reference and shared goals allow for better knowledge sharing within organizations. There are also lower transaction costs (Piazza-Georgi, 2002) and a cooperative spirit both within and between organizations with its customers, partners, and shareholders. Georgi further pointed out many advantages that social capital in organizations result low turnover rates, reducing severance costs, hiring and training expenses, lower attrition rates, and maintaining valuable organizational knowledge. These attributes are similar to the outcomes of structural bonds as discussed in Williams, Han, and Qualls (1998).

Strong psychological bonds between business dyads lead to mutual agreements and cohesive actions towards achieving common business goals. These cohesiveness actions can be seen through their personal behavioral factors such as commitment, reciprocity, hospitality, trustworthy and dependable actions, and caring nature towards each business dyads and organizational factors such as supplying products of high quality standard, timely actions, setting mutually beneficial prices and helping each other by sharing resources and knowledge. Cohen and Prusak (2001) also found greater coherence of actions due to organization stability and shared understanding among business dyads. This argument is further supported that “the greater the commitment of organization to a specific relationship, the greater the stability of that relationship and the greater the chance that the duration of the relationship will be longer” (Williams, Han, and Qualls 1998, p. 137; Wilson and Mummalaneni, 1988). It was their understanding that business relationships are determined partly by the appreciation and understanding that each country partner has of the other’s social and structural bonding requirements and expectations (Williams, Han, and Qualls, 1998).

Williams, Han, and Qualls (1998) pointed out two forms of commitment towards business relationships. Commitment to organization is labeled as structural bonding and

commitment to a person through greater degree of interpersonal orientation is labeled as social bonding. That means both organizational factors and personal factors influence the outcome of business relationships and thereby business success. As mentioned above, this study found similarities that both organizational and personal factors are important for better results of achieving business success. Discontinuity of business relationship is viewed as bad and a failure of business. Among many rewards highlighted as useful factors that ensured business success was partners helping one another in identifying new markets; expanding current markets; providing and sharing scarce resources; promoting markets through word-of-mouth and giving references; engaging in familiarization visits; and acting as bonded business partners. In many instances, participants stressed that where they did not have close relationships, their businesses failed due to cheating behaviors and non-payment of shipments. This study found that business relationships are important component entailing many positive attributes that leads to structural bonding.

Gaining deeper knowledge of dyads becomes the ground for predicting business success. Those who found negative factors suggest that mixing friendship and business may create conflicts (Beatty et al. 1996; Haytko 2004; Heide and Wathne 2006; Krugman 1958; Price, Arnould, and Tierney 1995). Their argument was that role conflicts arise due to conflicting expectations in certain situations that results role conflicts among partners. Conflicts lead to cognitive or psychological strain and therefore friendship in business may not work. Bonded friendship is seen as a way of developing harmonies between business dyad which lead to trustworthy business actions. Gaining deeper knowledge is important lived experience of a bonded relationship and none of the participants experienced conflicting behaviors between

international business dyads. On the contrary, it was their notion that in the absence of bonded relationships, they experienced deceptions and termination of business.

By analyzing these findings, I would like to raise a new research question, where to draw the border line for relationships with business partners. The boundaries of business relationships may lead to ethical practices of each partner and this question may require further research to understand the boundaries and ethical practices of business relationships. In summary, this research shows that in the Sri Lankan business context, friendship in doing business was accepted as an important factor for survival and growth of their businesses in international markets as it demonstrated structural bonding is an intrinsic outcome of social bonding between business partners.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study not only lead to future empirical research but also have significant implications for theory, policy, and practices.

Implications for Theory

The research findings show that relationships between cross-border business partners and clients worked as bridges that connected business people in many different nations. Over time those relationships were transformed into bonding glue between business partners that resulted mutual gains and satisfaction while achieving success in their SBs. Bridging and bonding have been discussed as important elements of social capital theory that can benefit those who are in relationship with. The findings will have significant implications for social capital theory. Social capital theory can be considered a potential theory that not only generate human capital but also has greater influence in internationalization of small business.

Looking at social capital in firms is a relatively new idea (Cohen and Prusak, 2001). When social connections are strong and numerous, there is more trust, reciprocity, information flow, collective action, happiness, and greater wealth (Francois, 2002). There is the widely held view that social and economic outcomes of individuals, families and communities are better where there are higher levels of social capital. According to Coleman (1990), family is the key institution through which social capital is transmitted. This is done through investment of time and effort, development of effective ties and guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (Wright, Cullen and Miller, 2001). Social capital in the form of close ties to family, community, and organizations may generate benefits by raising utility and output thus reducing the cost of transacting business due to higher trust and enforceability of sanctions. The findings will be useful in the establishment and management of successful cross-national business relationships. Some research shows that many companies frequently try to capitalize on social relationships to achieve economic aims (Grayson, 2007). Some encourage their friends and family network to generate new business directions (Meagher, 2006). Many firms attempt to benefit by fostering word-of-mouth recommendations among friends (Hughes, 2005; McConnel and Huba, 2007; Sernovitz, 2006). In the same vein, this study shows many positive effects of having trusting business relationships not only on business growth but also in personal and family lives. Mutual gains, expanded markets, enhanced innovations, augmenting resources, collaboration over competition, reciprocity, care, satisfaction, enjoyment, trust, social identity, personal and organizational credibility, gaining new insights are a few examples. These findings direct researchers to carry out further research to increase our understanding of positive and negative effects of social capital in internationalization of SBs. For example, this can be used for discovering and understanding new relationship concepts as well as for setting boundaries for

analytical purposes that expand current knowledge aiming to discover new aspects of relationships. In this process, future research may lead to identify new conceptual constructs of social capital theory that can be used in international business education or global economic development. Further, this will have implications for a new economic theory of foreign market entry. My argument is further supported by Ohmae (1999) that old economic theories that no longer apply in the interlinked global economy. Everyone involved in business at every level, as well as every informed consumer, needs to understand the real economy of the interlinked world.

Implications for Policy

Promotion of international business relations as a way of internationalization of SMEs can have implications on national and global economic policies. SME internationalization is still a new phenomenon that requires stimulating policy measures to harvest better results. Policies should focus on facilitation and encouragement of close business relationships rather than control of cross-border business exchanges happening today. Some of the potential aspects of policy measures are relevant to formation of international social and business networks, infrastructure and technological development, language and education, opportunities for social interactions and mutual exchanges among business partners around the globe by way of providing more opportunities for international collaboration.

This study shows that foreign market entry is the major stumbling block for small businesses. These research participants formed informal relationships mainly using relatives and friends who live in other countries. Conducive policy measures are still in demand to connect potential business partners around the globe. Therefore, viable policies that encourage SMEs to build cooperative relationships with customers, suppliers or other business partners are critical for success. This study shows importance of bridging ties to discovering novel business

opportunities in the globe. In this process, responsible authorities need to pay attention to pooling and providing resources. Though there are opportunities for international travels, still many restrictions are prevailed. Favorable policies that facilitate network formation, free flow of information, knowledge exchanges, product and services require international consensus and policies.

Globalization requires new types of expertise that traditional organizations often lack. While technology has eliminated many barriers to globalization, many significant barriers still remain, particularly those involving people and the organizations we build around them (Beaman, 2002). It is important to provide appropriate infrastructure and technology to business communities on an affordable basis. In today's environment, globalization has been the bearer of capital, ideas and culture. Although it threatens longstanding traditions and injures indigenous cultures, it also fosters new ideas, habits, and practices in its wake. Though many people can take advantage of the global communications and information revolution, still many SMEs are behind this trend. Therefore, policies, especially in developing countries need to ensure the access to technology and communication as well as other facilities. As Ohmae (1999) suggested, both country and currency are important in promoting international business. Today's exchange rates are much more volatile than they were a decade ago. It is natural that companies move deeply into the countries where they seek to neutralize the impact of currency, security, and facilities.

Implications for Practice

The current study findings show that the participants developed relational competencies over time by way of trial and error because there are no programs that encourage SME owner-managers to develop cross-border relational competencies. The common trend in the past was that most cross-cultural research and educational programs focused on employees of large

corporations. It is apparent that this study benefits practitioners in designing new educational programs for SME owner-managers. For researchers this study serves as a ground for new research agenda to help practitioners. It can be replicated in other countries and regions so that in the future it can generate interest and attention of major donors to finance to carry out a global study mobilizing practitioners and researchers of similar interest. Not only culture specific or culture general knowledge competencies but it also requires enhancing human competence on how to integrate knowledge of countries, cultures, and individuals into productions, marketing efforts, international business exchanges to build and sustain in fruitful business relationships.

Conclusion

This study highlights an emerging phenomenon of family like business relationships in internationalizing SMEs. Bonded relationships helped these participants to achieve business growth through expansion of their markets, innovations, and establishment of sustainable business partnerships. It also leads to fulfilled and enjoyable business and family lives. I argue that bonded relationships between owner-managers of SMEs over time leads to bonds between business organizations. Therefore, person-to-person relationship is a prerequisite for organizational relationships. In this endeavor, in a long run, bonded social relationships between individuals play a key role in establishing international business relationships that lead to organizational success.

References

- Allan, G. A. (1979). *A Sociology of friendship and kingship*. George Allen and Unwin.London.
- Beaman, K., ed. (2002). *Boundryless HR: Human capital management in the global economy*. An IHRIM Press Book. Published by Rector Duncan and Associates Inc. TX.

- Beatty, S., Mayer, M., Coleman, J. E., Reynolds, K. E and Lee, J. (1996). Customer-sales associate retail relationships. *Journal of Retailing*, 72(3), 223-47.
- Bliezner, R. and Adams, R. G. (1992). *Adult Friendship*. Sage, London.
- Brown, F. W. (1950). Pattern of buying farm equipment and supplies. *Journal of Marketing*, 15(7), 70-73.
- Clark, T. (1990). International marketing and national character: A review and proposal for an integrative theory. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(10), 66-79.
- Cohen, D. and Prusak, L. (2001). In Good Company. *How social capital makes organizations work*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. 214 + xiii pages.
- Coleman, J. S. (2000). Social capital in the creation of human capital. in Lesser, E.L., ed. *Knowledge and Social Capital, Foundations and Applications*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Boston, MA, pp.17-41.
- Cooke, R. A. and Rousseau, D. M. (1984). Stress and strain from family roles and work-role expectations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69(2), 252-60.
- Dwyer, R. F., Schurr, P. H. and Oh, S. C. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships, *Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 11-27.
- Ford, D. (1984). Buyer/seller relationships in international industrial markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 13, 101-112.
- Ford, D. (1980). The development of buyer-seller relationships in industrial markets. *European Journal of Marketing*, 14, 5(6), 339-354.
- Francois, P. (2002). *Social capital and economic development*. Rutledge: NY.
- Friedman T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. London: Penguin
- Geller, L. K. (2006). Lose the attitude. *Target Marketing*, 29 (12), 21-23
- Geringer, M. and Hebert, L. (1990). Measuring performance of international joint ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22, 249-263.
- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 28, 253-260.

- Giorgi, A. (1985). Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method. In Giorgi A (Ed.). *Phenomenology and Psychological Research*. (pp. 8-22) Duquesne University Press. Pittsburg
- Grayson, K. (2007). Friendship versus business in marketing relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(10), 121-139.
- Gross, N., Mason, W. S. and McEachern, A. W. (1958). *Explorations in role analysis*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Halpern, J. J. (1997). Elements of a script for friendship in transactions. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41(12), 835-868.
- Halpern, D. (2005). *Social capital*. Polity Press: UK
- Harrigan, K. R. (1988). Joint ventures and comparative strategy. *Strategic Management Journal*, 9, 141-158.
- Hartman, A. and Laird, J. (1983) *Family centered social work practice*. The Free Press. Canada.
- Haytko, D. L. (2004). Firm-to-firm and interpersonal relationships: Perspectives from advertising agency account managers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(3), 312-328.
- Heide, J. B. and Wathne, K. H. (2006). Friends, business-people, and relationship roles: A conceptual framework and a research agenda. *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (7), 90-103.
- Hewapathirana, G. I. (2008). *Internationalization of small business: Multiple case studies of successful small business managers in Sri Lanka*. Dissertation submitted to University of Minnesota as a partial fulfillment of PhD degree. May 2008.
- Hoffman, W. H. and Schlosser, R. (2001). Success factors of strategic alliances in small and medium-size enterprises: An empirical survey. *Long Range Planning*, 34, 357-381.
- Hofstede, G. (1979). Value systems in 40 countries: interpretation, validation, and consequences for theory. In L.H. Eckensberger, W.J. Lonner, and Y.H Poortinga, eds. *Cross-cultural contributions to psychology*, (pp.398-407). The Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger, Lisse.
- Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Holmlund, M. (2004). Analyzing business relationships and distinguishing different interaction levels. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33(4), 279-87.
- Holmlund, M. (1997). *Perceived quality in business relationships*. Doctoral Dissertation No. 66, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration. Finland: Helsinki.

- Hughes, M. (2005). *Buzzmarketing: Get people to talk about your stuff*. New York: Penguin Portfolio.
- Johnson, M. D. and Selnes, F. (2004). Customer portfolio management: Toward a dynamic theory of exchange relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(4), 1-17.
- Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D. and Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Killing, J. P. (1983). *Strategies for joint venture success*. Praeger, New York.
- Krackhardt, D. and Stern, R. N. (1988). Informal network and organizational crisis: An experimental simulation. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 51, 123-140.
- Krugman, H. (1958). Salesmen in conflict: A challenge to marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 23(7), 59-61.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- McConnel, B. and Huba, J. (2007). *Creating customer evangelists: How loyal customers become a volunteer sales force*. Chicago :Kaplan Business.
- Meagher, L. (2006). Gift incentives for customers bring in business. *Community Banker*, 15 (5), 24.
- Montgomery, J. D. (1998). Toward a role-theoretic conception of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104(7), 92-125.
- Mores, J. M. and Richards, L. (2002). *Read me first. For a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Sage Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- O'Driscoll, M. P., Ilgen, D. R. and Hildreth, K. (1992). Time devoted to job and off-job activities, interrole conflict and affective experiences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(3), 272-279.
- Ohmae, K. (1989). The global logic of strategic alliances. *Harvard Business Review*, 67(3-4), 143-154.
- Ohmae, K. (2005). *The next global stage: Challenges and opportunities in our borderless world*. Wharton School Publishing: Pennsylvania.
- Ohmae, K. (1999). *Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*. HarperCollins Business: NY.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed). Sage Publication.

- Park, H. (1991). Analysis of joint ventures, local managers' behavior and its impact on joint ventures cohesiveness: Korea case. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 5, 201-221.
- Piazza-Georgi, B. (2002). The role of human and social capital in growth: extending our understanding. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 26, 461-479.
- Premaratne, S. P. (2002). *Entrepreneurial networks and small business development: A case of small enterprises of Sri Lanka*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Maastricht School of Management, the Netherlands.
- Price, L. L., Arnould, E. J. and Tierney, P. (1995). Going to extremes: Managing service encounters and assessing provider performance. *Journal of Marketing*, 59 (4), 83-97.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital, *Journal of Democracy* 6(1), 65-78.
- Rabellotti, R. (1995). Is There an "Industrial District Model"? Footwear Districts in Italy and Mexico Compared. *World Development*, 23, 29-41.
- Reohr, J. R. (1991). *Friendship: An exploration of structure and process*. Garland Publishing, New York
- Rubin, J. Z. and Brown, B. R. (1975). *The social psychology of bargaining and negotiation*. Academic Press, New York.
- Sarbin, T. R. and Allen, V. L. (1968). Role theory. In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds. *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 488-567.
- Samli, C. A., Grewal, D. and Mathur, S. K. (1988). Industrial buying behavior: An exploration and a proposed model. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 16 (summer), 19-29.
- Scherer, J. (1972). *Contemporary community: Sociological illusion or reality?* Tavistock Publications, London.
- Schweiger, D. M., Sandberg, W. R., and Rechner, P. L. (1989). Experimental effects of dialectical inquiry, devil's advocacy, and consensus approaches to strategic decision making. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32, 745-772.
- Sernovitz, A. (2006). *Word of mouth marketing: How smart companies get people talking*. Kaplan publishing, USA.
- Torrance, P. E. (1957). Group decision making and disagreement. *Social Forces*, 35, 314-318.
- Turner, R. H. (1970). *Family interaction*. John Wiley, New York.

- Walker, O. C Jr., Churchill, G. A. Jr. and Ford, N. M. (1977). Motivation and performance in industrial selling: present knowledge and needed research. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(5), 156-68.
- Webster, F. E. (Jr.) (1992). The changing role of marketing in the corporation. *Journal of Marketing*. 56(4), 1-17.
- Williams, J., Han, S. and Qualls, W. (1998). A conceptual model and study of cross-cultural business relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 42, 135-143.
- Wilson, D. T. and Mummalaneni, V. (1986). Bonding and commitment in buyer-seller relationships: A preliminary conceptualization. *Industrial Marketing and Purchasing*, 1(3), 44-58.
- Wright, J. P., Cullen, F. T. and Miller, J. T. (2001). The family social capital and delinquent involvement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 29, 1-9.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zain, M. and Ng, I. S. (2006). The impacts of network relationships on SMEs' internationalization process. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 48(2), 183-205