

Strategies of Qatari Family Businesses to Face Globalization

Mohamed Zain, College of Business & Economics, Qatar University, Qatar
mzain@qu.edu.qa

Norizan M. Kassim, College of Business & Economics, Qatar University, Qatar
norizanmk@qu.edu.qa

Fatima Al-Mohannadi, Qatargas Operating Company, Qatar
fj.1985@gmail.com

This paper examines the opportunities and threats faced by Qatari family businesses from globalization and how they respond strategically to these factors. Data were obtained using a questionnaire survey involving 43 family businesses (FBs) in Qatar. The results show that being aware of the opportunities instead of the threats from globalization and the availability of networking positively affect the firms' readiness to face the challenge of globalization. The availability of networking also influences the firms to look for sources of fund to expand their business. Finally, the availability of the sources of fund not only influences the firms' readiness to face globalization but it also influences them to formulate new strategies to face globalization. Two specific implications of this study are also presented.

INTRODUCTION

Forces of globalization fuelled by advances of new technology have changed the pace of doing business in today's global business environment (Wind and Main 1998). This change has certainly affected family businesses (FBs) worldwide. FBs represent a large portion of business firms in Qatar and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The businesses are now operating in fast-changing environment where unanticipated threats and opportunities from the forces of globalization are imminent. The industries of these businesses are wide in range and cover many sectors including banking, contracting, construction, manufacturing, trading and services. The recent boom in oil prices, in addition to other factors has made prodigious shift in the economy of the GCC member countries such as Qatar. As a result, investment opportunities have been generated resulting in economic and social prosperity to many FBs in the member countries. This prosperity has strengthened the financial positions of the businesses and has enabled them to grow. But, the force or the challenge of globalization also attracted new foreign investors or competitors into the country. The breaking down of trade barriers between countries resulting from the force of globalization that is spreading through out the world has opened up many local markets including the Qatari market to foreign competition.

The global economy now reaches every corner of the world, and internationalization now involves not just the giant corporations but also many small and medium-sized enterprises (Zain and Ng, 2006). For example, the Arab World (including Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and the Gulf Cooperation Council states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia) has been attracting increasing international interest in recent years, particularly after the September 11, 2001 bombing in New York and the subsequent Bali, Madrid and London bombings. (Weir and Hutchings, 2005). In line with the increase in competition among firms throughout the world, firms must be competitive and agile (Zain, Rose, Abdullah and Masrom, 2005). Thus, on the one hand, globalization is a challenge to many domestic and national companies, including FBs since with the reduction in the trade barriers more foreign companies can enter the Qatari market. On the other hand, it also represents an opportunity to Qatari domestic and national firms in the sense that it is easier for them to enter foreign markets, since the trade barriers in the foreign markets are becoming lower as well. Thus, globalisation

represents both threats and opportunities to many local firms. Nevertheless, the ability of local FBs to compete with foreign multinationals, which tend to be much bigger in size than them, is rather uncertain. Thus, the introduction, growth and long-term survival of FBs depend largely on the entrepreneurial abilities and enterprise of individuals owning and managing these businesses (Ritchie and Brindley, 2005). With the coming of many foreign competitors into the country, can the FBs in Qatar maintain their status quo and remain complacent or does it require them to change in response to the new competition? How ready are the Qatari FBs to face the challenge of globalization. These are two questions that this research attempts to investigate.

Hutchings and Weir (2006) have found that while *guanxi* (networks, connections, contacts and even nepotism) in China is adapting to internationalization, *wasta* (connections or pull) remain traditional in its influence on business and social life in the Arab world. *Wasta* is seen as a force in every significant decision in Arab life (Cunningham and Serayah, 1993). The Arab World is an area of growing economic significance and offers investors and exporters many opportunities across many business sectors (Ali, 2005). However, the nations of the Arab World do reflect great economic, political and social diversity – ranging from the oil rich nations of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain to those that are experiencing decline, such as Palestine and Jordan (Cunningham and Sarayah, 1994).

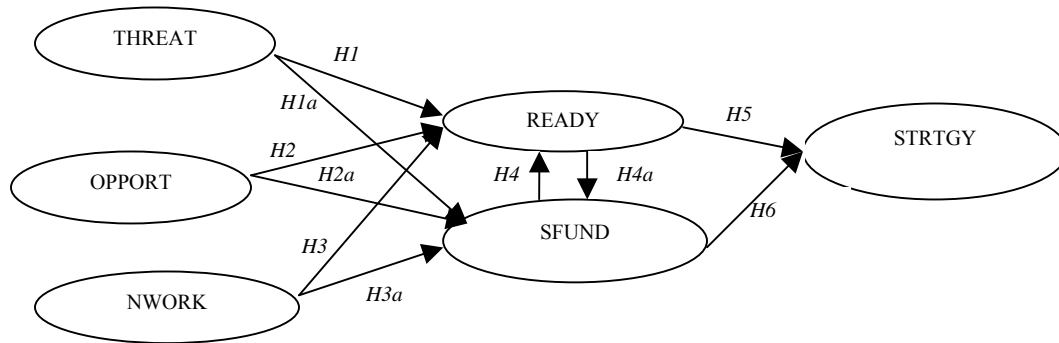
The need for FBs to come up with new strategies in response to globalization has been suggested by researchers. For example, in their research on Australia's textiles, clothing, and footwear industry which is facing threats from globalization, Buxey (2005) suggest that the local firms need to focus on quality and customer service, preferably in niche markets, or for specific customer groups, and develop technologically advanced products. Recently, a prominent entrepreneur in Qatar has pointed out about the need of the Qatari family businesses to be restructured in order to survive competition (Saraswathi, 2006). Thus, the main objective of this research is to investigate the threats and opportunities that are faced by Qatari FBs from the force of globalization and how they respond to these negative as well as positive factors in terms of their new competitive strategies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The theoretical framework of this research is shown in Figure 1. As can be seen from the figure, the eventual strategies of Qatari FBs to face the challenge of globalization could be influenced by their state of readiness to face globalization as well by the availability of fund (source of fund) to expand their business. The factors critical to survival and growth in this new business environment is the ability of firms to be aware of and to foresee the emerging changes taking place so that they are more prepared to pre-empt competition, to take advantage of the opportunities and to avoid threats associated with the dynamics of the environment (Coskun and Altunisk, 2002). Thus, their state of readiness to face globalization and their need for fund could be the result of their awareness of opportunities and threats posed by foreign competitors. One of the factors that determine or influence the performance of firms is the source of funding, particularly the availability of grants (Kapur, Ferris, Juliano, and Berman 2006; Wood 2006). Research by Hussain, Millman, and Matlay (2006) has found that in terms of initial (start-up) funding, a large proportion of businesses relied exclusively on financial support from their immediate family or own saving. However, as their business expanded and gained more experience they would rely more on banks and other financial institutions for financial support.

The state of readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization could be influenced by whether they have contacts with foreign business people who could be their prospective partners in business, i.e. their established or potential networking, which is a form of *wasta* as described above.) The internationalization process of firms via networking has been intensively explored in the past (see Zain and Ng, 2006; Johanson & Mattson, 1988; Axelsson & Johanson, 1992; Johanson & Vahlne, 1992;

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



Coviello & Munro, 1997; Andersen, 1996; Ellis, 2000). Chetty and Patterson (2002) pointed out that the concept of business networks (Anderson et al., 1994) came from the social exchange perspective on social network (e.g. Emerson, 1972; Cook & Emerson, 1978). The internationalization process of firms via networking seems to be a more useful concept since it is possible to overcome the problems of limited resources, experiences and credibility (Lu and Beamish, 2001). A more recent form of network that has emerged among firms involves E-commerce corporations on the Internet. These corporations resemble network organizations in the form of interdependent coalition of task or skill specialized entities (Achrol & Kotler, 1999; Singh & Kundu, 2002) which can result in them gaining certain advantages (see Singh and Kundu, 2002, p. 686). Within the last decade the theoretical debate on internationalization has concentrated on specific features of small companies in an effort to establish a general theory (Julien (1994) in De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). For example, a research done on Australian small and medium enterprises found that exports typically were initiated on the basis of the decision maker's existing social network (Ellis & Pecotich, 2001). Hendry and Brown (2000) found that national and international relationships involving technology-based firms are much stronger than local ones.

Based on the above relationships between businesses and the forces of globalization, a number of hypotheses are derived as follows:

H1: The awareness of the threats of globalization will positively influence the readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization.

H1a: The awareness of the threats of globalization will positively influence Qatari FBs to seek for sources of funding in order to face globalization.

H2: The awareness of the opportunities from globalization will positively influence the readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization.

H2a: The awareness of the opportunities of globalization will positively influence Qatari FBs to seek for sources of funding in order to face globalization.

H3: The availability of networking with foreign parties will positively influence the readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization.

H3a: The availability of networking with foreign parties will positively influence the Qatari FBs to seek for sources of funding to face globalization.

H4: The availability of the sources of funding will positively influence the readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization.

H4a: The readiness of Qatari FBs to face globalization will influence Qatari FBs to look for sources of funding to expand their business.

H5: The readiness of Qatari FBs will influence them to formulate strategies to face foreign competitors, i.e. the face the challenge of globalization.

H6: The availability of the sources of funding will influence Qatari FBs to formulate strategies to face foreign competitors, i.e. the face the challenge of globalization.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out in three stages as described below. Structural equation modeling (SEM) using the AMOS 4.0 software was used to establish the causal relations between the constructs.

Stage One – Questionnaire design

The data for this study were gathered by means of survey questionnaires administered to Qatari FBs. Basically, the questionnaire contains three parts. Part one began with the general assessment of the respondents' perceptions of the current development of globalization which may affect their business. Part two aimed at assessing the seven research variables: the awareness of the companies of the threats of globalization facing them (THREAT)(4 items), opportunities from globalization (OPPORT) (6 items), their networking efforts or initiatives in order to expand their business overseas (NWORK) (6 items), the sources of funds required by them to expand their business overseas (SFUND) (6 items), their general readiness to face globalization (READY)(11 items), and finally their strategies for expanding their business overseas (STRTGY) (11 items).

The third part of the questionnaire was for capturing demographic information of the respondent and his/her business. In our effort to assess the six items mentioned above, we employed a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) because we believe that a scale with a mid-point tends to make respondents guess what might be a socially acceptable answer to the question (Garland 1991; Kassim 2001). The questionnaire was translated back-to-back to ensure functional equivalence of its items in two languages (English→Arabic→English).

Stage two – Data collection and scale development

A pilot study involving 7 family businesses was first conducted in early July 2007 to further improve the scales, to determine problems in completing the instrument and to estimate the time required to complete the questionnaire. From the result of the pilot study a few aspects were reconsidered with regard to both the whole questionnaire content and the specific questions. The main aspect reconsidered for the final copy of the questionnaire were rewording of some of the questions and rearranging the sequence of some of the questions.

The questionnaires were distributed to 235 family businesses (FBs) listed in the family business database obtained from the Qatar Chamber of Business and Industry in July 2007. After about two weeks from the mailing date only 7 questionnaires were returned. Due to the poor response rate we decided to resend the questionnaires via a fax to those who had not responded to the earlier mailing (223 firms). By the middle of September 2007, 16 additional questionnaires were received, two of which were incomplete and were discarded. In our efforts to increase the number of completed questionnaires, we decided to distribute the questionnaires to Qatar University students whose family members or friends have family business. From this effort, 22 additional completed questionnaires were received giving us a total of 43 questionnaires which were eventually used for analysis.

Stage three – structural equation modeling

The hypotheses were tested using SEM because this technique provides statistical efficiency. Also, its ability to assess the relationships comprehensively has provided a transition from exploratory to confirmatory analysis (Hair *et. al.*, 1995). Moreover, SEM techniques are particularly appropriate for the study of multiple dependence relationships such as those investigated in this research.

RESULTS

The respondents' demographics are shown in Table 1. As can be seen from the table most of the respondents (58%) were the top management of the FBs, i.e., those holding such posts as chairman, managing director, chief executive office or general manager. Since top/senior management are normally involved in the strategic management process of firms, we can assume that their responses the questions posed to them reflect the strategic directions of their firms.

Large percentages of the FBs were either in contracting and trading (48%) and construction and real estate (24%) businesses. The majority of the firms were private limited companies (WLL) (70%) and most of the businesses (91%) were established in the 1970's onwards. Most of the firms (56%) employed not more than 100 employees while about 22% employed between 101 to 500 employees. These demographics represent the recent development in the country which has been undergoing rapid infrastructural development following the booming economy resulting from the increase in the gas and petroleum prices, the main sources of revenue of the country.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographics

1. Respondents (N=24)	%
Top Management (Chairman, MD, CEO, GM)	58.3
Middle Managers/Technocrats	41.7
2. Nature of Business/Industry (N=25)	
Contracting & Trading	48.0
Construction & Real Estate	24.0
Manufacturing	8.0
Computer Products & Services	8.0
Engineering Consultant	4.0
Diversified	4.0
Hotel	4.0
3. Ownership (N=33)	
Sole Proprietor	18.2
Partnership	15.2
With Limited Liability	69.6
4. Year of Establishment (N=33)	
1950's	6.1
1960's	3.0
1970's	27.3
1980's	18.2
1990's	18.2
2000's	27.3
5. No. of Employees (N=32)	
0 – 50	40.6
51 – 100	15.6
101 – 500	21.9
501 – 1000	3.1
1001 – 2000	9.4
2001 – 3000	3.1
>3000	6.3

Source: From the data analysis

The representativeness of the sample of respondents could not be compared with the population from which the sample was drawn because there was no other surveys or research results on Qatari FBs available.

Of the 43 respondents, a large majority (95.5%) either agreed (72%) or strongly agreed (23%) that they were aware about the current development of globalization that is occurring throughout the world. Interestingly, more of the respondents (38 or 88% of the 43) who thought that globalization represents an opportunity for them to expand their business internationally rather than a threat (13 or only 30% of the 43 respondents) to their business. The representativeness of the sample of respondents could not be compared with the population from which the sample was drawn because there was no other surveys or research results on Qatari FBs available.

Of the 43 respondents, a large majority (95.5%) either agreed (72%) or strongly agreed (23%) that they were aware about the current development of globalization that is occurring throughout the world. Interestingly, more of the respondents (38 or 88% of the 43) who thought that globalization represents an opportunity for them to expand their business internationally rather than a threat (13 or only 30% of the 43 respondents) to their business.

To test the dimensionality of the instrument, all the items were analyzed using AMOS 4.0 software to perform a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Scale development sample data second-order CFA

	THREA T	OPPORT	NWORK	READY	SFUN D	STRATGY
χ^2	1.610	6.439	15.625	47.676	1.242	48.096
Df	2	9	9	32	2	34
CFI	1.000	1.000	0.921	0.906	1.000	0.923
RMSEA	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.000	0.000
No. of items	4	6	6	10	4	10
Reliability	0.67	0.84	0.81	0.86	0.69	0.87
Composite reliability (CR)	0.68	0.85	0.81	0.86	0.69	0.88
Average variance extracted (AVE)	0.36	0.51	0.43	0.39	0.36	0.42

The robust maximum likelihood estimation was used to allow for the absence of multivariate normality. Model fits were evaluated using the composite-fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) because of their robustness, stability, and lack of sensitivity to sample size (Fan *et al.*, 1999).

The initial CFA models for readiness, source of fund and strategies were not acceptable, so the approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was utilized and one item was eliminated from each factor to achieve an acceptable fit as shown in Table 2.

The sample factor means, standard deviation (std. dev.) and correlations are reported in Table 3. The hypotheses were tested using SEM and the results of the tests are as shown in Table 4. As can be seen from the table, of the ten hypotheses tested, only five (H2, H3, H3a, H4, and H6) were found to be significant. Also shown in the table, the strength of the relationships among the constructs was represented by the respective standardized path coefficient. Following Cohen's (1988) recommendations, standardized path coefficient with absolute values of less than 0.10 may indicate "small" effect; values of around 0.30 a "medium" effect; and values of 0.50 or more a "large" effect.

Table 3. Scale development sample factor means, standard deviations. and correlations

	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. THREAT	3.083	0.454	1.00					
2. OPPORT	2.858	0.557	0.112	1.00				
3. NWORK	2.809	0.511	-0.121	0.238	1.00			
4. READY	2.878	0.476	-0.201	0.176	0.440**	1.00		
5. SFUND	2.605	0.583	0.061	0.391**	0.497**	0.501**	1.00	
6. STRTRY	2.556	0.574	0.234	0.358**	0.317*	0.259	0.387*	1.00

Note: THREAT = Threat; OPPORT = Opportunities; NWORK = Networking; READY = Readiness; SFUND = Source of fund; and STRTRY = Strategies

* = one-tailed, significance level at $p < 0.01$

** = two-tailed, significance level at $p < 0.05$

Table 4. Full structural equation model

Path		Standardized path coefficients	t -value	p -value	Results
READY	← THREA T	0.04	1.039	ns	H1: Rejected
READY	← OPPORT	0.30	2.043	0.041	H2: Accepted
READY	← NWORK	0.55	2.538	0.011	H3: Accepted
SFUND	← THREA T	-0.22	-1.312	ns	H1a Rejected :
SFUND	← OPPORT	-0.08	0.484	ns	H2a Rejected :
SFUND	← NWORK	0.11	2.511	0.012	H3a Accepted :
READY	← SFUND	0.65	2.145	0.032	H4: Accepted :
SFUND	← READY	-0.27	-0.630	ns	H4a Rejected :
STRTRY	← READY	0.09	0.528	ns	H5: Rejected
STRTRY	← SFUND	0.34	2.095	0.036	H6: Accepted

Model fit: $\chi^2 = (df = 3) = 6.424, p < 0.093$; CFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.000

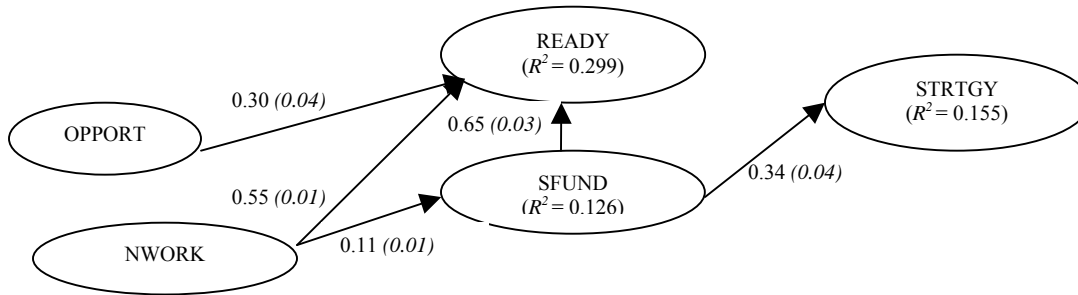
DISCUSSION

The final and parsimonious model of the relationships is shown in Figure 2. From this figure we can see that the standardized path coefficients (β) support the relationship that the independent variables (opportunities, networking and source of funds) are antecedents and that they positively affect readiness. Overall, they explain 29.9 per cent ($R^2 = 0.299$) of the variance of dependent variable of readiness. Interestingly, the results of the analysis indicate that threat has no significant relationship ($\beta = 0.04$; $t_{\text{value}} = 1.039$) with readiness. Intuitively, this means that being aware of the opportunities (and not the threats) arising from globalization, and the readily availability of fund for expanding their business will positively influence the readiness of the FBs to face the challenge of globalization.

Also, the argument that the independent variables (threat, opportunities and networking) are antecedents and that they are positively related to source of fund is not supported in the findings (threat: $\beta = -0.22$; $t_{\text{value}} = 1.312$; opportunities: $\beta = -0.08$; $t_{\text{value}} = 0.484$). Nevertheless, networking has a significant relationship

with readiness ($\beta = 0.11$; $t_{\text{value}} = 2.511$) where, overall it explains 12.6 per cent ($R^2 = 0.126$) of source of fund's variance. A possible explanation for this observation is that, even if the firms are aware of the opportunities and threats arising from globalization it will not influence them to look for sources of fund to expand their business. Only after they have developed networking with foreign parties would they be looking for sources of fund to expand their business.

Figure 2. The Final Model



Note: The figures next to the arrows indicate path's β coefficient and p value (in parenthesis)

The argument that readiness is an antecedent and positively related to strategy is not supported by the findings. Also, the path coefficient from readiness to strategy is insignificant ($\beta = 0.09$; $t_{\text{value}} = 0.528$). However, the coefficient of source of fund is significant ($\beta = 0.34$; $t_{\text{value}} = 2.095$) where, overall it explains 15.5 per cent ($R^2 = 0.155$) of strategy's variance. This indicates that the availability of the source of fund has a positive influence, not only on the readiness of the FBs to face the challenge of globalization, but also on the need for them to formulate strategies to face the challenge.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The results of this research have clearly indicated the awareness of the Qatari FBs about the challenge of globalization where most of them viewed such a challenge to be more of an opportunity than a threat. The results also indicate that Qatari FBs are ready to face the challenge of globalization and the readiness is basically influenced by their awareness of the opportunities and threats posed by the force as well as by the awareness of the need to obtain funds so that they can expand their business overseas to take advantage of the opportunity. The results also demonstrate the importance of the FBs to develop networking with foreign parties in their effort to expand their business overseas in order to take advantage of globalization. When that has been achieved, only then will they look for the availability of funds to expand their business. Thus, two specific strategic and practical implications; one for the for Qatari FBs and the other for the Qatari government, can be drawn from this research. Firstly, Qatari FBs need to work on establishing networking with foreign parties in order for them to be ready to face globalization. This is where the role of *wasta* as mentioned in the introduction of this paper will come into play. Secondly, Qatari government needs to find ways to ensure that funding are available for FBs to expand their business either through direct loans or grants or by making sure that financial institutions set aside a portion of their funds for family business lending.

This research is not without limitations. The main limitation of this research is the fact that the response rate from the survey was rather low which necessitated us to resort to using personal contacts who have access to family business either through their friends or relatives. This limits our ability to make broad generalization from our finding. Nevertheless, since this is the first time the research on this subject is conducted in Qatar, we believe the findings are still interesting and useful. Hopefully, in future a bigger sample of the FBs can be obtained to further support our findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research paper was made possible by a grant from the Qatar National Research Fund. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Qatar National Research Fund.

REFERENCES

- Achrol, R.S and Kotler, P. (1999). Marketing in the network economy. *Journal of Marketing* Vol. 63, Special issue, pp. 146-163.
- Ali, A.J. (2005), *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization*, Edward Edgar, London.
- Anderson, J.C. and Gerbing, D.W. (1988) 'Structural equation modelling in practice; A review and recommended two-step approach', *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 103 No. 3, pp. 411-423.
- Anderson, J.C., Hakansson, H. and Johanson J. (1994). Dyadic relationships within a business network context. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 No. 1, pp. 1-15.
- Andersen, O. (1996). The international market selection: A relationship marketing approach. Paper presented at the AIB Conference, Banff, September 26-29.
- Axelsson, B. and Johanson, J. (1992). Foreign Market Entry - the Textbook vs The Network View. In Axelsson and Easton G. (1992), (Ed), *Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality*, 218-234. Routledge, London.
- Buxey, G. (2005), Globalization and manufacturing strategy in the TCF industry, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 100-113.
- Chetty, S. and Patterson, A. (2002). Developing internationalisation capability through industry groups: the experience of a telecommunications joint action group. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 10, pp. 69-89.
- Cohen, J. (1988) *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*, Academic Press, New York.
- Cook, K.S. and Emerson, R.M. (1978). Power, equity and commitment in exchange networks. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 43, pp. 721-39.
- Coskun, R. and Altunisk, R. (2002), *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, Vol. 8 No. 6: pp. 272-291.
- Coviello, N. E. and Munro, H. J. (1997). Network relationships and the Internationalisation Process of the small software firms. *International Business Review*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 361-386
- Cunningham, R.B. and Sarayrah, Y.K. (1993), *Wasta: The Hidden Force in Middle Eastern Society*, Praeger, Westport, CT.
- De Chiara, A. and Minguzzi, A. (2002). Success factors in SMEs' Internationalization process: an Italian investigation. *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 144-153.
- Ellis, P. (2000). Social Ties and Foreign Market Entry. *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 443-70.
- Ellis, P. and Pecotich, A. (2001). Social Factors Influencing Export Initiation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 119-131.
- Emerson, R.M. (1972). Exchange theory, part I: exchange relations and network structure. In Zelditch, M. and Anderson, B. (eds), *Sociological Theories in Progress*, Vol. 2, pp. 2-65, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Fan, X, Thompson, B., and Wang, L. (1999) 'Effects of sample size, estimation methods, and model specification on structural equation modelling fit indexes', *Structural Equation Modelling*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 56-83.
- Garland, R. (1991), *The mid-point on rating scale: is it desirable?* Sage, Beverly Hills.
- Hair, J., Anderson, R., Tatham, R. and Black, W (1995) *Multivariate data analysis with readings*, Prentice Hall International, New York, NY
- Hendry, C. and Brown, J. (2000). Regional clustering of high technology-based firms: opto-electronics in three countries, *Regional Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 2, p. 16.
- Hussain, J., Millman, C. and Matlay, H. (200), SME financing in the UK and in China: a comparative perspective, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 13 No. 4: pp. 584 – 599.

- Hutchings, K. and Weir, D. (2006), Understanding networking in China and the Arab World; Lessons for international managers, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 272-290.
- Johanson, J. and Mattson, L. G. (1988). Internationalization in industrial systems - a network approach, in Hood, N. and Vahlne, J. E.(Eds.), *Strategies in Global Competition* (pp. 287-314). Croom Helm, London.
- Johanson, J. and Vahlne, J.E. (1977). The internationalization process of the firm - a model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 23-32. In Buckley, P. J. and Ghauri, P. (Eds), *The Internationalization of the Firm: A Reader*, Academic Press, Cambridge.
- Kassim, NM, (2001), Determinants of customer satisfaction and retention in the cellular phone market of Malaysia, unpublished PhD thesis, Graduate College of Management, Southern Cross University, New South Wales, Australia.
- Kapur, V., Ferris, J., Juliano, J. and Berman, S. (2006), *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 11-23.
- Lu, J.W. and Beamish, P.W. (2001). Internationalization and performance of SMEs. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 22, pp. 265-286.
- Ritchie, R. and Brindley, C. (2005), Cultural determinants of competitiveness within SMEs, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 104-119.
- Saraswathi, V. (2006), Family businesses need to restructure, an interview with Sheikha Hanadi bint Nasser bin Khaled Al Thani, <http://www.explore-qatar.com/indexposts.html?show=1&idz=167>, accessed 14-12-06
- Singh, N. and Kundu, S. (2002). Explaining the growth of E-Commerce Corporations (ECCs): an extension of the eclectic paradigm. *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 679-697.
- Weir, D. and Hutchings, K. (2005), Cultural filtering in the Arab World and China: exploring the interrelationship of the technological knowledge age and traditional cultural networking and interpersonal connections, in van de Bunt-Kokhuis, S.G.M. and Bolger, M. (Eds), *World Wide Work*, Free University of the Netherlands, The Hague.
- Wind, J.Y., and Main, J. (1998), *Driving Change: How the Best Companies Are Preparing for the 21st Century*, Kogan Page, London.
- Wood, E.H. (2006), *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 441-453.
- Zain, M., Rose, R.C., Abdullah, I. and Masrom, M. (2005), The relationship between information technology acceptance and organizational agility in Malaysia, *Information & Management*, Vol. 42 No. 6, pp. 41-51.
- Zain, M. and Ng, S.I. (2006), The Impacts of Network Relationships on SMEs' Internationalization Process, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 48 No. 2 (March-April), pp. 183-206.