Using the GSS for cross cultural business networking

Tony Ward
Sylvia A. Ward
Central Queensland University

ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper addresses the needs associated with entry into, and relationship nurturing in, suitable business networks, and suggests possible roles for using a distributed Group Support System to facilitate development and entry in a cross-cultural environment for particular organisational groups. The basic characteristics of cross-cultural relationships, the group support technology and business networks are each reviewed, and the common threads identified. From this base, a number of suggestions are provided for using this technology to facilitate the nurturing of business network relationships, including a study to address a number of research questions.

Keywords: business networks, group support systems, cross culture, relationships, network catalyst, nurturing.

INTRODUCTION

The globalisation of trade in recent decades has resulted in companies finding it more difficult to be competitive in all markets. One aspect of business-to-business relationships where companies in different countries have experienced particular difficulties is in the area of business networking (Ward, Ward & Shackleford 2001). There are a number of benefits to businesses to be gained from operating in business networks. Many companies find it difficult to enter business networks in their home country, and may not even appreciate the many benefits to being a 'member', or may not know that certain networks exist (Purchase 1999). These difficulties are exacerbated in overseas countries for people from both Western and Asian cultures alike, and especially where radically different cultures are involved, and where getting face-to-face with business partners is difficult. These barriers to entry and nurturing the relationship are well known and documented in the business networking literature (Shackleford & Ward 2001). Group Support Systems (GSS), also called electronic meeting systems (EMS), have been shown to facilitate relationship building

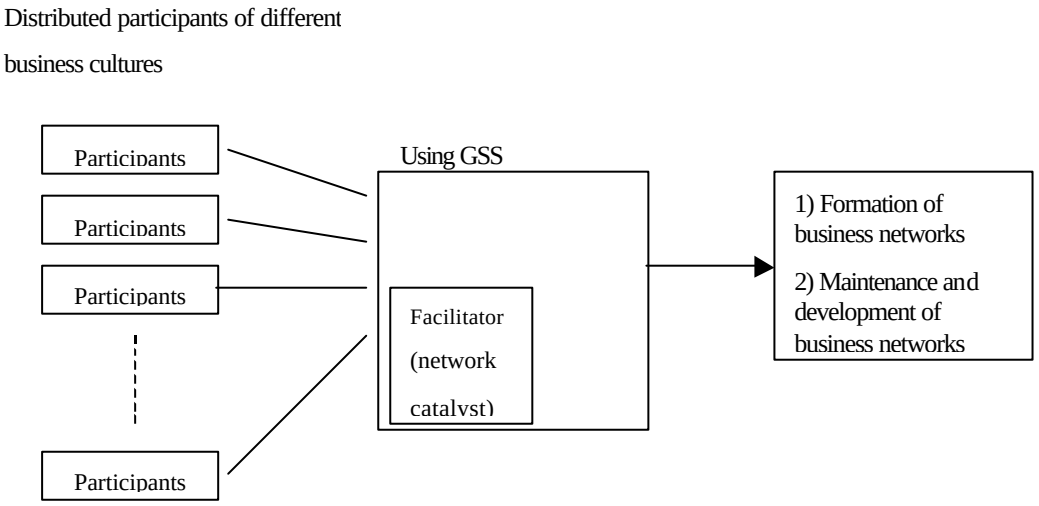
and their potential use in assisting with the development of business networks (Ward, Ward & Shackleford 2001).

This conceptual paper provides an overview of GSS, culture and business networks and then describes the potential use of GSS to help companies to enter existing distributed networks or to create new networks in a cross cultural environment, a use for the GSS that has not been identified previously in the literature.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework for this application of the GSS to business networking.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



In the situation addressed, there are a number of distributed participants who are linked by computer using GSS software. The 'meeting' is coordinated and controlled by a facilitator. The aim of the meeting is to aid the formation of a business network and, in subsequent sessions, to further develop and maintain the network.

GROUP SUPPORT SYSTEM S

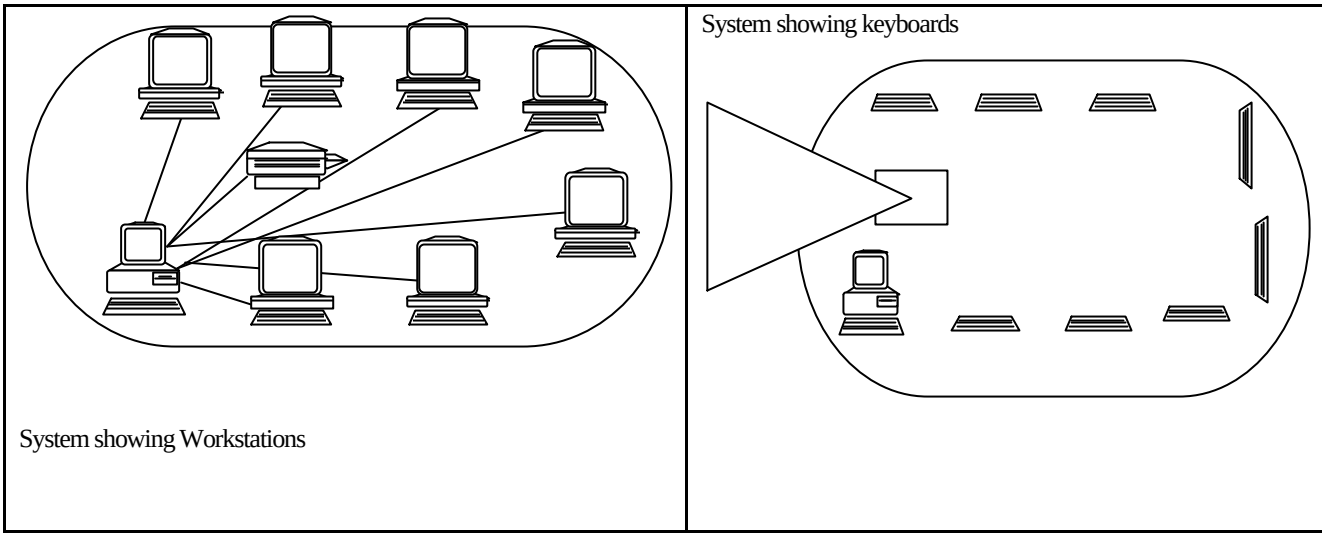
The need for electronic collaboration, communication and coordination for networking is growing as a response to globalisation and the need to continuously adapt to changing requirements/conditions. Within this context, modern organisations recognise the important role of group interaction. There is a growing supply of enabling technology applications intended to support collaboration, including electronic mail, videoconferencing, application sharing and Group Support Systems (Hinssen 1998). A web-based GSS is the technology considered for this research.

The technology

Group Support Systems (GSS) are a set of communication, structuring, and information processing tools that are designed to work together to support the accomplishment of group tasks (Zigurs & Buckland 1998). Groups using Group Support Systems in and across organisations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of group interaction have been studied by many researchers. The benefits identified include the reduction of communication barriers, an increase in productivity, better facilitation of decision making activities, an improvement in group dynamics, and an improvement in the outcomes of group meetings (Williams & Wilson 1997). GSS support a range of group activities such as planning, problem solving, and creative tasks, and also provide for simultaneous input, anonymous input, input feedback and a group display (Zigurs & Buckland 1998). Figure 2 shows two different room layouts for GSS for face-to-face meetings.

Group support systems (GSS) are meeting systems that have been developed for groups to assist in the collaboration process. GSS are now used routinely by many organisations in synchronous mode (same time/same place, and same time/different place) for a variety of purposes. Some researchers also use the term GSS to discuss asynchronous (different time/different place) modes, but these are not considered in this paper. Another term ‘groupware’ is also used for collaboration tools that support groupwork (Turban & Aronson 2001).

Figure 2. Structure of GSS for face-to-face meetings



The term Distributed Group Support Systems (DGSS) (Hiltz, Dufner, Fjermstadt, Kim, Ocker, Rana, & Turoff 1996) was introduced to differentiate between same place and different place systems. A DGSS is an Internet conferencing environment that offers real-time structured networking over the Internet or intranets.

Even though the Internet has been in operation since 1969, it was not used much until 1992 when the World Wide Web (WWW) was established. The WWW now provides a graphically based hypertext network that could incorporate many different text styles, pictures, sound and video. Dennis, Quek & Pootherie (1996) stated that through the WWW interface, the Internet suddenly became accessible to a global community without barriers of language, culture or geographical distinction.

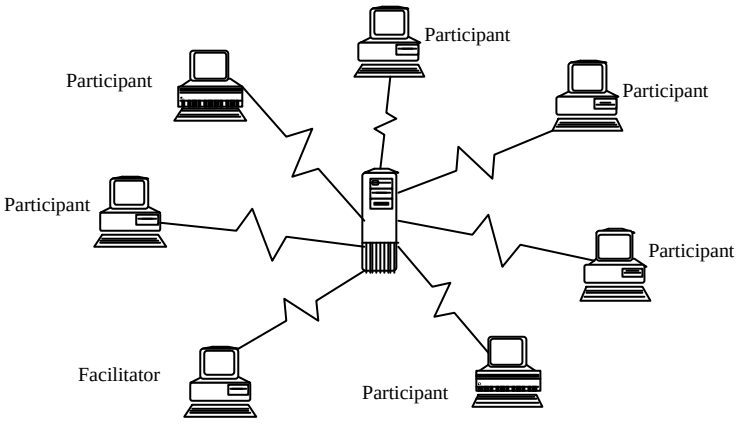
Distributed meetings

Prior to the introduction of the WWW, Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) concentrated on group work within organisations. Many developments in GSS and CSCW fields took place during the period when the world of computing and communication was characterised by proprietary systems and standards. Hence most systems were not only platform specific, but also restrictive in their ability to communicate with other systems (Bannon 1992). In 1991,

researchers Nunamaker, Dennis, Valacich, Vogel and George undertook experiments on distributed groups in the laboratory and not in the field. These experiments would have been undertaken on an intranet.

The WWW provided a way for different systems to easily communicate with one another through web browsers, thus allowing interactive, inter-organisational communication across different proprietary networks using different operating systems. New technologies have been and are being developed to take advantage of this facility. Groups that use these online technologies are often known as virtual groups. 'Virtual' is considered to be any human interaction that is not face-to-face and whose participants have considerable interaction on-line. Virtual communication technologies have been available to virtual teams for some time in the form of email and chat rooms, but a more structured technology for group meetings, such as DGSS, provide teams with better opportunities for coordination and collaboration. One such DGSS technology is AnyZing^{TM}. Figure 3 shows the structure of a DGSS network.

Figure 3. DGSS network structure



Source: Developed for this research

Virtual teams

DeSanctis and Gallupe (1987) identified three dimensions of GSS, group size, member proximity and task type, while Watson, Ho & Raman (1994) proposed that culture is a fourth dimension. The characteristics of virtual teams have also been identified as group, task, environmental, organizational and the particular technology (GSS) being used (Hiltz, et al 1996).

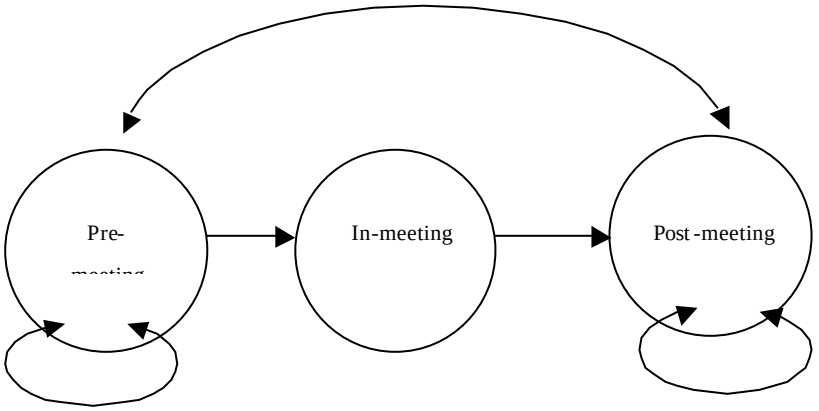
Virtual teams typically work by linking through electronic tools, such as the telephone, fax, email, NetMeeting, Lotus Notes, and other web-based communication systems. Prior research suggests that virtual teams have all the challenges and social processes of face-to-face teams but with the added complexity of the electronic interface, other limitations of the technology, and cultural differences (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994).

Like other teams, virtual teams consist of human beings and they have interpersonal and identity needs that must be met to optimise their ability to work and to collaborate. Thus issues, such as member solidarity, cooperation and unity of actions and values, become special concerns (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994).

Virtual team meetings

Meetings are rarely single events. They are embedded in a circle of preparation and follow up, identified by Oppenheim (1987) as a 'meeting system'. Abdat and Pervan (1999) proposed a meeting model using a basic meeting cycle to show how events surrounding the meeting are interrelated, as shown in Figure 4. A meeting is a group information process to achieve specific goals and may include the cycle of pre-meeting, in-meeting and post-meeting (Abdat, Atkinson & Pervan 2000).

Figure 4. Basic meeting cycle



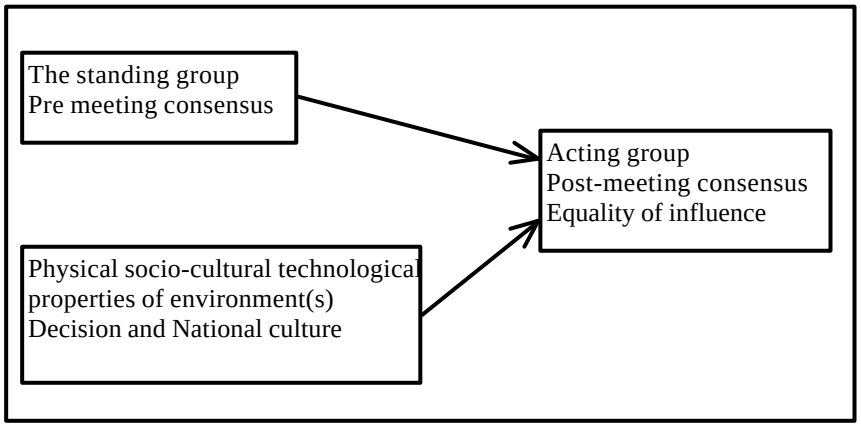
Source: Abdat, Atkinson & Pervan, 2000

Pre-meetings are unscheduled events in which subsets of the participants of the meeting are able to communicate and interact, either at the same time or different time before an In-meeting. The purpose of these activities may be to exchange information, discuss ideas, negotiate, and seek consensus before coming to the In-meeting (Abdat, Atkinson & Pervan 2000).

The In-meeting is a scheduled event in which all participants of the meeting are able to communicate and interact synchronously, and includes the traditional face-to-face meeting (Abdat, Atkinson & Pervan 2000). Post-meetings are unscheduled events in which subsets of the participants of the meeting have the possibility to communicate and interact, either synchronously or asynchronously after the in-meeting. The purpose of these activities may be to clarify details from the In-meeting, and to organise and implement decisions made (Abdat, Atkinson & Pervan 2000).

Watson, Ho & Raman (1994) developed a Causal Model, showing that In-meeting behaviour has an effect on pre-meeting conditions (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Causal Model



Source: Watson, Ho & Raman, 1994

The causal model was developed from McGrath's (1984) framework that identified four major classes of properties that set the conditions under which group interaction takes place:

- The biological, social and psychological properties of individuals

- The physical, socio-cultural and technological properties of environments.
- The existing relationships between group members prior to meeting (the standing group)
- The characteristics of group task.

The effects of these four sets of properties shape group interaction.

The causal model asserts that the behaviour of an acting group is influenced by the type of decision support, the group's national culture, and pre-meeting consensus. The dependent variables are pre meeting consensus and equality of influence.

In virtual teams the pre-meeting and consensus in Watson, Ho & Raman's 1994 study may be even more important when multi-cultural virtual meetings are organised which may impact on pre-meeting preparation.

Watson Ho & Raman 1994 concluded that culture will shape the adoption of technology. Groups, like organisations, use technology to achieve certain objectives, which are strongly influenced by the cultural environment. GSS features that are culturally compatible will be appropriated, and the remaining features may be reshaped to satisfy cultural norms or ignored.

CULTURE

The majority of cultural research has been dominated by US and European research (Smith & Bond 1994). Most of the research to date on business networks and the GSS has been undertaken in a Western cultural environment. In this research, we explore these two entities within a cross-cultural context encompassing Western and Asian cultures.

There are scores of ways in which culture can be defined. Culture is a complex construct that includes knowledge, customs, law, morals, beliefs, religion, and other habits and abilities acquired within society (Jeannet & Hennessey 1995). Culture is a sub-discipline of social psychology, which is '…. the study of individuals in social contexts' (Moghaddam 1998, p. 3), aimed at better understanding social behavior (Smith & Bond 1994; Moghaddam 1998). In this research generalised cultural backgrounds of 'Western' and 'Asian' environments are used. It is recognised that both of these generic categorisations are an over simplification when approached from a

micro level, but are useful for the macro level approach of this research, and that simple stereotypes have serious limitations where individual business relationships are involved (Kriz 2002).

Hofstede (1980) identified four dimensions of national culture by a statistical analysis of 116,000 questionnaires completed by IBM employees in 40 countries: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Watson, Ho & Raman (1994) when studying the use of GSS in a cross-cultural environment considered the dimensions of individualism and power distance on which the United States and Singapore differ. The United States is characterised by high individualism and low power distance, while Singapore culture typically features low individualism and high power distance (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994).

Individualism implies a preference for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are supposed to take care of only themselves and their immediate families, as opposed to collectivism, which denotes a preference for a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other-in-group to look after them, in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

Power distance is the extent to which society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally. In a high-power distance society, subordinates defer to superiors and do not question their authority.

Hofstede's (1980) identification of cultural variables data was collected in the 1970s, he argued that culture is very stable over long periods and it takes a sharp discontinuity to precipitate norm shifts. Bunke (1989) indicated that Hofstede's findings were still valid. Probably the most striking example of a stable culture is in Japanese business which is well known for its close intra and inter-firm networks that have existed for centuries and are known as Keiretsu groups. These groups have fostered a clan culture of cooperation and innovation both within and between organisations (Kase & Yu-Shan Liu 1996; Nassimbeni 1998). The new century will test this stability as cultural differences become more blurred with the increase in globalisation.

In collectivist cultures, with their tightly knit social frameworks, there is generally an extensive set of expectations about interpersonal behaviour, where for example, violating these expectations threatens the social framework. Maintenance of the proper forms and harmony is usually

considered preferable to openness that could lead to discord (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994). In essence, the task oriented focus of a GSS could conflict with the socially-oriented values of Asian culture, and could thus have unintended consequences for group performance in a cultural environment that places a high value on social oriented communication (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994). However, cross-cultural studies of GSS technology are highly relevant to a post industrial society in which managerial teams, often composed of individuals from different cultures, will make extensive use of information technology to support group decision-making (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994). Previous studies of management theories based on Western norms and research, for example, Haire, Ghiselli and Porter (1966), have shown that the results from these management theories do not directly transfer to a dissimilar culture (Watson, Ho and Raman 1994).

Most designs of current GSS's are based on Western concepts of desirable group behaviour. Oriental cultures have a different model of desirable group behaviour, and a GSS designed for the Western culture may have unintended consequences in an oriental culture (Watson, Ho and Raman 1994). In order to improve group performance, a GSS would need to influence the social behaviour of a group, and both technical and social facilities may need modification for successful adoption in another culture. It is thus important to understand the effect of culture on GSS design and implementation (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994), whose study demonstrated the importance of culture by comparing the findings of experimental GSS investigations in two very different cultures: the United States and Singapore.

Other studies (as shown in Table 1) have been undertaken using GSS technology and Asian and/or multicultural groups. It was found that a GSS could be used effectively regardless of a group's nationality or language (Aiken, Hwang and Martin 1993).

Table 1. Prior research in GSS and culture

Author	Activity	Results	Groups researched
Tan et al 1993	Influence of minority source	Status influence altered	
Aiken et al 1993	Effective use of technology	Effective regardless of culture or language More participation without violating their cultural beliefs.	Malaysia and American groups
Watson et al 1994	Adoption of technology	Culture will shape adoption of GSS features Meeting designers need to match tools and communication to meeting goals and cultural norms	Singapore and US groups
Niederman, 1997	New technology New meeting norms	Reaction similar Some differences	
Aitkinson & Pervan, 1998	Anonymity	Higher productivity (HPD)	Four National cultures
Abdat & Pervan 1999			Indonesian groups
Anderson 2000	Cognitive conflict task	No difference for pre-meeting consensus, influence equality and post-meeting consensus No difference for consensus change Higher levels of perceived process gains, perceived decision satisfaction, perceived decision process satisfaction and perceived quality of the discussion.	Multicultural and US groups

Source: Developed for this research

A GDSS may be especially beneficial for Korean and other groups whose cultures emphasise conformity, respect, deference to superior, and preservation of face, because such a system allows individuals to participate more without violating their cultural beliefs. Tan, Watson, Wei, Raman and Kerola's (1993) focused on the issues concerning minority sources and demonstrated the equalising impact of a GSS on status differentials. These studies added to the knowledge on how a GSS can alter status influence.

Higher power distance cultures have been found to derive greater productivity from anonymity (Aitkinson & Pervan 1998). All culture derives productivity from anonymity and perceive

anonymity as advantageous, a phenomenon identified when multicultural groups using GSS produced a significantly higher number of ideas than homogeneous groups using GSS.

Some studies considered cultural issues when using asynchronous technology. In Asian groups, harmony might be enhanced by using a GSS to create a distributed meeting in which group members are physically separated and information exchange is asynchronous. This approach should be particularly useful when some group members are using a language other than their native tongue (Watson, Ho & Raman 1994). Results from the study undertaken by Anderson (2000) suggested that distributed, asynchronous group support systems may be used effectively by mixed cultural groups facing a value-based cognitive conflict (negotiation) task.

Managing business relationships across cultures is emerging as one of the most important challenges we are facing in the new century. Ohmae's view of globalisation (glocalisation), is to think global but act local, and does not usurp the concept of culture and the need for local adaptation.

Cultures have evolved a number of different meeting formats, but there is a common goal of information exchange. Thus a GSS should be a flexible assortment of information exchange tools that can be arranged to operate under a variety of communication configurations.

Reaction to a new technology such as GSS may be quite similar even across fairly different cultures. However, subtle contrasts in reactions between facilitators within two cultures lend support to the notion that culture accounts for some differences. The GSS facilitator ought to be aware that in a different culture new meeting norms may need to be introduced, along with new tools.

BUSINESS NETWORKS

There are many benefits for organisations being in a suitable network, such as keeping updated on industry developments, watching the competition, news on local events, being aware of relevant legal developments, sharing resources and regulatory developments. The theory behind networking is that a 'network' of close business relationships enables an organisation to become more competitive, thus leading to competitive advantage (Spekman 1996).

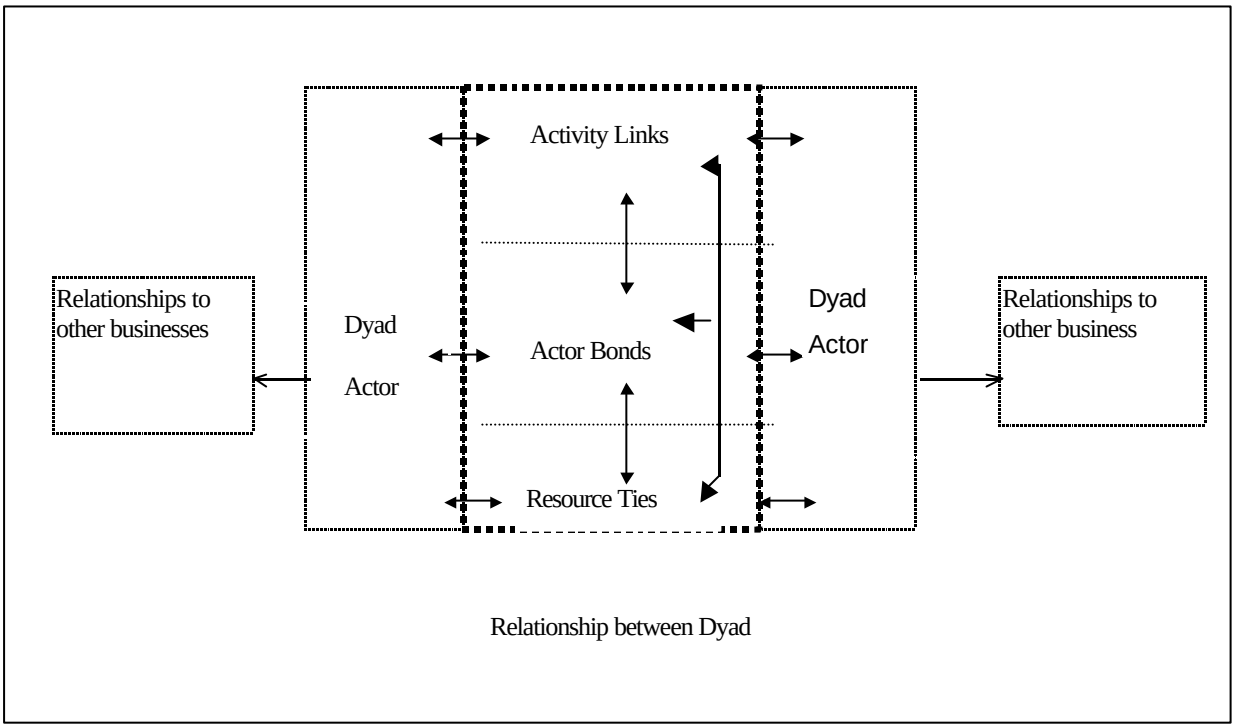
Business networks are curious entities, for example, there are usually no formal groups (although industry/professional associations may form a nucleus for such networks), no teams, no obvious boundaries and no formal labels or names. In some situations there will be formal groups where members of a network are overt, and the names of the 'members' are known to all. Such networks would usually be found in not-for-profit situations (for example, charities, government, and professional disciplines), rather than competitive situations. This rationale suggests that networks in a competitive environment are not formalised, whereas at least some networks in non-competitive situations are more likely to be formalised. In most competitive situations, the networks just exist 'in the business' and a company (or a member of their staff) is either a part of the network(s) or not. There is thus no formal membership, list of addressees or common/public knowledge of the existence, let alone membership list, of such a network.

Networks are not simply the domain of the study of business, sociology, or any single discipline or endeavour, but appear to be a universally recognised principle, where individual units become a part of a larger system to achieve a purpose that an individual could not achieve. Networks appear to be a part of the natural and human world, mentioned in almost every field of research.

One of the most influential models in networks is the Actor-Activities-Resources model (AAR) developed by Håkansson & Snehota (1995). In this model, as shown in figure 5, it is posited that activities between actors lead to actor bonds being formed, and opportunities to share resources, which leads to stronger bonds, and thus this reiterative sequence of events leads to networks being formed and developing further. The elements in this model are:

1) *Activity Links* - are activities that connect individuals (dyadic interactions) and may be technical, administrative or commercial activities. Such linking activities may include joint marketing efforts, manufacturing facilities, information sharing, or distribution (Håkansson & Snehota 1995).

Figure 5. Actor-Activities-Resources Model



Source: Håkansson & Snehota 1995

2) *Actor Bonds* - provide links between actors. Such actors will often be representatives of an organisation, thus the bond is also made (through surrogacy). Activities within a network result from the activities of individuals (Håkansson & Snehota 1995). Thus, bonds between organisations are created out of individual interactions, or socialisation, (links leading to bonds) between individuals. Personal contacts occur between various individuals, groups and hierarchical levels in organisational structures. "Information is exchanged, adaptations are agreed, negotiations are performed, crises are overcome and social bonding occurs" (Turnbull, Ford & Cunningham 1996, p. 11). As bonds are established between actors, 'an organised web of actors emerges' (Håkansson & Snehota 1995, p. 33).

3) *Resource Ties* - arise when two or more organisations utilise resources together. The use of resource elements (technological, material, knowledge resources and other intangibles) provides

links that further engender links and bonds in an iterative manner, the relationship (at least in an idealised model) being strengthened with each iteration. As resources are developed over time, the bond between individuals, and thus organisations, is nurtured.

Bonds between organisations arise because of bonding between individuals, yet the three layers are not independent, as there is interplay between the actor bonds, activity links and resource ties. 'Actors carry out activities that activate resources. Activities are resource consuming and evolve as capabilities of actors develop. Resources limit the range of activities an actor can pursue (Håkansson & Snehota 1995). While significant research has been conducted on industrial networks in Western cultural environments, there is limited research in cross-cultural contexts.

One of the difficulties associated with business networks faced by people is to know which networks they should try to enter and how to gain entry. In any given situation barriers to entry are apparent, such as:

- a lack of knowledge of the existence of an appropriate network;
- a lack of knowledge about the value (potential benefits) of business networks;
- a lack of time, especially apparent in Small Medium Enterprises;
- a lack of ability to enter the network, such as appropriate contact(s).

The term 'network catalyst' was coined by Purchase (1999) to describe a person who provides entry and/or an introduction into a network, usually through a referral from another existing 'member'. The role of the catalyst thus appears to be critical, not only for the 'outsider' wishing to gain entry, but also to keep the network vibrant through the introduction of new actors and the replacement of actors who, for whatever reason, leave. These new actors bring new ideas, their own connections into other networks and provide the dynamics for a healthy 'tissue', for networks are dynamic 'living' entities requiring regular renewal. If there is no renewal process then networks become stale and gradually lose their effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The three sections above, GSS (including DGSS), Culture and Business networks, have reviewed the uses of the GSS/DGSS, key elements of etic, or cross cultural, environments and business networks. The focus of the proposed research is to investigate the potential uses of the DGSS for business networking in a cross-cultural environment. The above discussions have indicated a number of limitations in which all three of these constructs can successfully operate. The purpose of this section is to identify common ground, if any, in which the DGSS can be used for business networking in a cross cultural environment, and in particular an Asian environment.

Both the DGSS and networking disciplines described above were developed in a Western cultural environment, and within that environment the DGSS is not applicable for use in all networks, but Ward, Ward & Shackleford (2001) demonstrated an example of how the DGSS could assist the formation and operation of business networks in a Western cultural environment. We also know that networks operate in an Asian culture and in Western/Asian cultural context. The addition of Asian cultural characteristics (albeit in a generalised form) further restricts the potential applications of the DGSS. Table 2 provides a set of the characteristics for each of these three constructs.

Table 2. Characteristics

DGSS	Asian culture	Networks
- restricted to team situations - membership of group known to all actors - common goal(s) - appropriate technology for access	- language differences (inter cultural) - lack of openness of interactions - emphasis on dyadic interactions, c.f. groups or teams - role of referral - obligation to reciprocate favour - role of familial ties	- lack of formal groups - dyadic interactions between actors - use of network catalyst - benefits to all actors (but may be different between actors) - often lack of common goal(s)

Source: Developed for this research

The introduction of the Asian cultural characteristics provides four factors that can be readily overcome, as follows:

- language difficulties can be overcome by using English (Asian organisations normally use English speaking staff for many interactions) and/or by using interpreters;
- the role of the referral has much in common with the role of the network catalyst/facilitator;
- the obligation to reciprocate favours in Asian business circles is often exhibited in Western business, though not so rigourously applied. This characteristic does not inhibit the use of the DGSS; and,
- likewise, the tendency for Asian business people to use familial ties does not inhibit use of the DGSS.

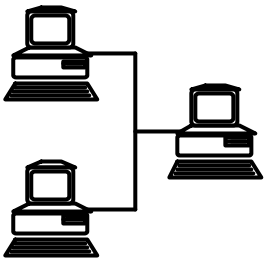
The key factor that could restrict utilisation of the DGSS is the general lack of openness of Asian business interactions, which does not favour the use of the DGSS, especially in competitive situations.

Using the DGSS in Western/Asian business networks

Business networking groups often have common issues and common goals that may benefit from DGSS supported activities. Members of a network that live close together may have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, but geographically dispersed members are at a disadvantage. A DGSS, allows activities such as the sharing of information, the processing of electronic information, and an opportunity to build collaborative knowledge through electronic communication systems. The DGSS has the potential to provide support to all members wherever they are located to participate in interactive communication which would eliminate the time and cost of travel.

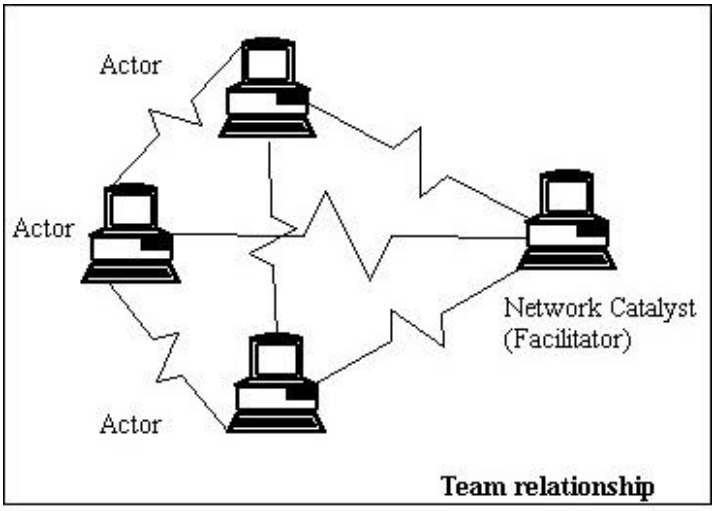
Nurturing the facilitation of a dyadic relationship between two geographically dispersed actors is shown in Figure 6. Such an arrangement would be ideal for initial 'meetings' and for making the introduction, and also act a 'warm up' for group discussions by allowing the participants time to become adjusted to, and familiar with, the technology. This type of arrangement would also be ideal for pre meeting dyadic interactions, allowing the participants to 'network' before a meeting in much the same way as face-to-face.

Figure 6. Nurturing a dyadic relationship



Once participants are familiar with dyadic interactions, team/group meetings, either formal or informal, could be arranged to facilitate the development of a business network(s), as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Facilitating a business network



The flexibility of the GDSS systems, together with their worldwide reach, thus enables 'meetings' to be convened in many forms.

PROPOSED STUDY

A study is proposed here, together with a number of research questions for an initial study of the use of the GSS in a distributed, cross-cultural environment. The study would entail addressing the use of a DGSS between 'actors', who are from different cultural backgrounds and geographically

distributed, using a facilitator acting as a network catalyst to develop a business network. A number of research questions would be addressed:

1. Does the DGSS enable the facilitation of the formation of a business network?
2. Does the DGSS enable the maintenance of a business network?
3. Does the DGSS enable the further development of a business network?
4. What key skills are required of a facilitator in this situation?
5. Are there key Pre-meeting and Post-meeting activities required to aid the network forming process?
6. Are there any cultural variables that pose particular difficulties with respect to forming business networks?
7. Can the DGSS provide sufficient social interaction for business networks to form, in particular for cultures where socializing activities are an integral part of business practices?

The implementation of such a study would provide an indication of the main attributes of using the DGSS in such a situation and of the key success factors for such utilisation.

SUMMARY

Reviewing the characteristics above, there is an indication that while the DGSS may not be an optimum tool to facilitate network activities in all situations in Asia (as is the case in Western cultures), there are applications where this technology would be beneficial. The DGSS may thus have potential to facilitate the nurturing of business relationships and networks in a cross-cultural context.

REFERENCES

Abdat, S. & Pervan, G.P., 1999, 'Developing Group Support Systems for Indonesian culture at the Pre-meeting stage of strategy formulation: A proposal and some initial requirements', *in Proceedings of the 5th International Conference of the International Society for Decision Support Systems*, Melbourne.

Abdat, S., Atkinson, D.J. & Pervan G.P, 2000, 'Selective broadcast during asynchronous pre-meeting stage of strategy formulation: A GSS capability for Indonesian culture', in *Proceedings of the 33rd Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences*, Hawaii, IEEE Computer Society Press.

Aiken, M., Hwang, M.R. & Martin, J., 1993, 'A comparison of Malaysian and American groups using a Group Decision Support System', *Journal of Information Science Principles and Practice*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 489-91.

Atkinson, D. & Pervan, G., 1998, 'Group support systems and productivity in four national cultures', in *Proceedings of the 6th European Conferences Information Systems*, France. 1648-54.

Anderson, W.N., 2000, *Cultural values and communication mode: A study of culturally* homogeneous *and culturally heterogeneous groups*, Rutgers State University of New Jersey, Newark.

Bannon, L.J., 1992, '*(Re) Discovering CSCW*', Lecture at EC Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy, October.

Bunke, H.C., 1989, 'Lessons from Singapore', *Business Horizons*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2-10.

Dennis, A.R., Quek, F., & Pootherie S.K., 1996, 'Using the Internet to implement support for distributed decision making', in *Implementing Systems for Supporting Management Decisions: Concepts, methods and experiences*, in P. Humphreys, L. Bannon, A, McCosh, P. Migliarese and J-C Pomerol (ed). Chapman & Hall, London.

DeSanctis, G. & Gallupe, R.B., 1987, *'A foundation for the study of group decision support systems'*, Management Science, Vol.33, No.5, 589-609.

Haire, M., Ghiselli, E., & Porter I., 1966, *Managerial thinking: An international study*, Wiley, New York.

Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. 1995, *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*, Berkshire, London, Thompson Business Press.

Hiltz, S.R., Dufner, D., Fjermstad, J., Kim,Y., Ocker R., Rana A., & Turoff, M., 1996, 'Distributed Group Support Systems : Theory Development and Experimentation', in Olsen, B.M., Smith, J.B. & Malone, T. (eds)., *Coordination Theory and Collaboration Technology*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, NJ.

Hofstede, G.H., 1980, *Culture's consequences, international differences in work-related values*, Sage Publications, Beverley Hills, California.

Hinssen, P.J.H. 1998, *What difference does it make? The use of groupware in small groups*, Telematica Instituut Fundamental Research Series, no. 002, Enschede, The Netherlands.

Jeannet, J-P. & Hennessey, H.D. 1995, *Global Marketing Strategies*, 3rd edn., Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Kase, K. and Yu-Shan Liu, J. (1996), 'Entrepreneurial networking in Japanese management', *International Marketing Review,* Vol. 13, No. 3.

Kriz, A. 2002, *Business trust in Chinese/Western interactions*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Central Queensland University.

Moghaddam, F.M. 1998, *Social Psychology-Exploring Universals Across Cultures*, W. H. Freeman & Company, New York.

Nassimbeni, G. 1998, 'Network structur es and coordination mechanisms - a taxonomy', *International Journal of Operations and Production Management,* Vol 18, 6.

Nunamaker, J.F., Dennis, A.R., Valacich, J.S., Vogel, D.R. & George, J.F. 1991, 'Electronic meeting systems to support group work,' *Communications of the ACM,* Vol 34, 40-61.

Oppenheim, L, 1987, *Making meetings matter: A report to the 3M Corporation,* 3M Meeting Management Institute, Austin, Texas.

Purchase, S. (1999), *Relationships in International Business Networks,* doctoral thesis, Central Queensland University, Queensland.

Shackleford, R. & Ward, A. 2001, 'Barriers to entering business networks for SMEs', *ANZMAC Conference Proceedings*, Auckland, New Zealand.

Smith, P.B. & Bond, M.H. 1994, *Social Psychology Across Cultures: Analysis and Perspectives*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston.

Spekman, R. E. 1996, 'A Reflection on Two Decades of Business-to-Business Marketing Research', in Iacobucci, D. Ed, *Networks in Marketing*, London, Sage Publications.

Tan, B.C.Y, Watson, R.T., Wei, K.K., Raman, K.S., & Kerola, P.K, 1993, 'National culture and group support systems: Examining the situation where some people are more equal than

others, *in Proceedings of the 26th Hawaii International Conference of Systems Sciences*, IEEE Computer Society Press, Hawaii, pp. 132-141.

Turban, E & Aronson, J.E., 2001, Decision Support Systems and Intelligent Systems, 6th ed, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Ward, S.A., Ward, A. & Shackleford, R. 2001, 'Using the GSS for business networking', *SCI 2001 Conference Proceedings*, Orlando, Florida.

Watson, R.T., Ho, T.H., & Raman, K.S. 1994, 'A fourth dimension of Group Support Systems', *Communications of the ACM*, Vol. 37, No. 10, 45-55.

Williams, S.R. & Wilson, R.L. 1997, 'Group support systems, power and influence in an organization: A field study', *Decision Sciences*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 911-37.

Zigurs, I. & Buckland, B.K. 'A theory of task/technology fit and group support systems effectiveness' *MIS Quarterly*, September, 1998, 313-34.