

**RELATIONSHIP QUALITY BETWEEN EXPORTERS IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES AND FOREIGN IMPORTERS**

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Abstract

A firm's competitive advantage can be created through keeping long-term relationships with customers. To achieve a successful long-term relationship, partners have to develop and maintain a high degree of relationship quality. Although the importance and benefits of a high quality relationship is widely recognised, little research has been undertaken to examine the major factors that impact on relationship quality between exporters and importers, especially in the context of developing countries. To bridge this gap, this research attempts to examine the relationship quality between exporters in developing countries and their foreign importers. Specifically, it investigates the major factors that impact on the quality of business relationships between developing country-based exporters and their foreign importers. These factors are information exchange, cultural sensitivity, and market and learning orientation. A model hypothesising the relationships between these factors and relationship quality was developed. A random sample of 297 exporting firms in Vietnam was surveyed to test the model. The results show that the model has an acceptable fit to the data and all the hypotheses were supported. Implications for business firms and directions for future research are also addressed.

Introduction

It is impossible for firms not to have relationships with other firms as they cannot operate in isolation (e.g., Hakansson 1982; Blois 1997). Research has shown that a firm's competitive advantage can be created through keeping long-term relationships with customers and that many firms are moving from transactional discrete exchanges to relational ones (Ganesan 1994). This is because loyal customers will bring more profits to firms than the price-sensitive and deal-prone switcher (Reicheld 1996). In addition, committed relationships are among the most durable advantages because they are difficult for competitors to understand, to copy, or to displace (Day 2000). The emergence of this trend indicates that several firms are beginning to formally realise the importance of relationship quality between them and their customers. Understanding how to initiate, develop, and maintain high quality buyer-seller relationships in international markets is critical to successful export involvement (Styles & Ambler 1994). Consequently, the role of market relationships has emerged as a top priority for most business firms around the world. However, research on inter-firm relationships, particularly research on relationship quality, has largely focused on developed countries, e.g., the United States and others (Leonidou & Kaleka 1998). This research makes an attempt to investigate the major factors that impact on the quality of business relationships between developing country-based exporters and their foreign importers. It is relevant to explore this specific relationship as for many developing countries and economies in transition, their future economic growth depends on both expanding exports overall and upgrading the technological sophistication of their manufacturing operations and hence improve the content of their export offerings. On the other hand, from the perspective of importers in developed countries, cost and competitive pressures and the progressive lowering of protection levels requires such firms to continually seek out more competitive sources of supply and these are increasingly likely to be found in developing countries. As doing business with such countries is often viewed as entailing greater risk, improving relationship quality with developing country exporters is likely to reduce such risk.

Relationship quality

Relationship quality is an important aspect in maintaining and evaluating buyer-seller relationships. It can be defined as “an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs or expectations of the parties based on a history of successful or unsuccessful events” (Smith 1998, 78). Relationship quality has several distinct dimensions such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction (e.g., Smith 1998), willingness to invest, conflict, expectation of continuity (e.g., Kumar et al. 1995), and minimal opportunism (e.g., Dwyer & Oh 1987). Though many components are employed to describe relationship quality, this research uses trust, commitment, minimal opportunism, and satisfaction as the components of relationship quality. The reason for using these four components is that they have received strong empirical support in the relationship marketing literature (e.g., Dorsch et al. 1998). In addition, they have been widely adopted in studies related to relationship quality (Dwyer & Oh 1987; Dorsch et al. 1998).

Rapidly increasing competitive environments are forcing business firms to seek more creative and flexible means for coping with competitors. Building collaborative relationships with customers is a means for lessening such severe competition (Doney & Cannon 1997). Such collaborative relationships are likely to rely on the quality of relationships, characterised by high levels of trust, commitment, satisfaction, and minimal opportunism. A high quality relationship enables a firm and its partners to enjoy the long-term benefits of the relationship, ultimately leading to strengthened competitiveness and reduced transaction costs (Noordewier et al. 1990). This makes it easier for the firm to satisfy the customer than its competitors, leading to an increase in customer loyalty. Therefore, the firm may have better opportunities for improved performance in terms of sales, and profitability in the long-run (Crosby et al. 1990).

Relationship quality is also considered to be the essence of relationship marketing (Jap et al. 1999) and serves as an indicator of the health and future well-being of long-term relationships (Crosby et al. 1990). Therefore, several researchers have attempted to investigate possible predictors of relationship quality. For example, salesperson’s expertise and relational selling behaviour have been found to have a positive impact on relationship quality between salespersons and customers in the life insurance industry (Crosby et al. 1990). Dwyer & Oh’s (1987) study found that the quality of channel relationships is affected adversely by the degree of partners’ bureaucratization. Procedural fairness has been examined to have a positive impact on relationship quality (Kumar et al. 1995), while environmental uncertainty has a negative effect on relationship quality. Smith’s (1998) study indicated that relational bonds have a positive effect on relationship quality. Following the same light of this stream of research, this paper examines the impact of four key organisational factors on relationship quality, i.e., information exchange, cultural sensitivity, and market and learning orientations. It considers three factors, in terms both of their individual impact on relationship quality and the interrelationships between them.

Information exchange

The first of these factors is information exchange. Several studies suggest that the exchange of information is an essential part of both traditional industrial selling and relationship marketing (e.g., Dwyer et al. 1987). Information exchange is a prerequisite to learning from each other, and for preventing and correcting failures. It expresses a bilateral expectation

that parties will proactively provide information useful to the partner (Heide & John 1992). Thus, information exchange can be seen as a safeguard to exporters in the sense that buyers can be expected to provide unforeseen information that may affect exporters. It lowers buyers' perceived risks and improves suppliers' credibility (Hakansson 1982).

Open and prompt communication among partners is viewed as an indispensable characteristic of trusting relationships (Larson 1992), because it provides the basis for continued interaction, from which partners further develop common goals and values. By fostering shared values, and mutual support, collaborative communication can lead to an improvement of trust, satisfaction, and commitment between exporters and importers. Information exchange between firms fosters more confidence in the continuity of the relationship and reduces dysfunctional conflict (e.g., Dwyer et al. 1987). Information exchange, therefore, will resolve the potential conflicts in operations and enhance a satisfactory working relationship. This is because effectively exchanging information between partners will enable the partners to anticipate and respond to each other's needs. Also, the fulfilment of each other's needs will lead to an increase in the level of satisfaction (Ahmed & Al-Motawa 1997). This leads to the following hypothesis (see Figure 1):

H1: The greater the degree of information exchange by a firm, the greater the degree of relationship quality between the firm and its foreign partner.

Cultural sensitivity

The second of the factors impacting on relationship quality that will be explored is cultural sensitivity. There is a general agreement that cultural sensitivity entails awareness, cultural understanding, and reduction of cultural bias (e.g., LaBahn & Harich 1997). Cultural sensitivity can be defined as a firm's learning and adaptation to its exchange partner's national business practices (LaBahn & Harich 1997). LaBahn & Harich (1997) also suggest that little systematically empirical research has examined how cultural differences combine with theories of relationship marketing in the international business setting. Johnson et al. (1996) identified the role of cultural sensitivity in relation to information exchange but this still remains unexplored in the context of international business relationships.

Cultural sensitivity and information exchange

Acquisition of sufficient information on foreign markets is crucial for a firm's export expansion (Leonidou & Katsikeas 1996). The quality and quantity of information is not only relatively limited in export firms but expensive and unavailable (Welch & Luostarinen 1993), especially to developing country-based exporters. In developing countries, the underdevelopment of and high cost of communication methods make it difficult for the exporter to frequently exchange information with its foreign importers. In addition, the uncertainty surrounding international markets is higher in comparison with that of the domestic market. Due to firms' limited knowledge regarding foreign market characteristics, the uncertainty becomes higher in developing country markets. Menon & Varadarajan (1992) noted that greater environmental instability will lead to greater use of information. Due to uncertainties inherent in international markets, developing country-based exporters often lack adequate information. Therefore, firms can reduce such uncertainties by interacting more intensively and effectively with foreign customers to enhance a mutual understanding between them. Ahmed & Al-Motawa (1997) also suggest that more frequent

contacts and visits between two partners may enable them understand each other's way of doing business.

The theory of internationalisation (e.g., Ford 1998) suggests that culturally distant exporters need to allocate more effort across all relationship building activities than in the case where exporters are closer to the focal customers. Therefore, enhancing the understanding of and adaptation to differences in culture in the foreign country helps exporters reduce the "distance" between parties in their export relationships. Consequently, it can be argued that an exporter who is sensitive to its partner's culture will face a lesser barrier to communication. Culture is inseparably tied to communication. This is because partners communicate with each other based on the "programming of cultural mindset" (Hofstede, 1984, 21). In other words, people have culturally determined styles and ways of doing business, acquired primarily through their national culture, but also through their business activities. It is widely acknowledged that it is easier to communicate with partners who share the same view of the world (Tornroos et al. 1993). This is consistent with reception theory. This theory postulates that people use some general patterns or codes that make it easier for them to interpret each other's behaviour (Langhoff 1997) because the codes of a given culture delimit the range of conceivable possibilities. It means that cultural sensitivity helps people to understand the behaviour or communication of others. More directly, cultural sensitivity allows exporters to more easily obtain and interpret information on foreign markets. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed (see Figure 1):

H2: The greater the degree of a firm's cultural sensitivity, the greater the degree of information exchange with its foreign partner.

Market orientation

The third of the factors impacting on relationship quality is that of market orientation. The importance of market orientation is crucial to managers and scholars (Narver & Slater 1990). Market orientation focuses an organisation on continuously collecting information about target customers' needs and competitors' capabilities, and on using this information to continuously create superior customer value (Slater & Narver 1995). Market orientation is best viewed as a form of organisational culture. Narver & Slater (1990, 21) define market orientation as "the organisational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of a superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business." It consists of three components – customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination.

Market orientation and cultural sensitivity

A market-oriented firm is managed so as to acquire information on the market and then respond to the market based on that information. The firm continuously modifies its marketing strategies in response to and, in anticipation of, changing needs and competitive actions in a dynamic marketing environment. Such consistent efforts by the firm will narrow the perceptual gap between the firm's management and its customers (Zeithaml et al. 1990) and provide a source of ideas for change and improvement (Hurley & Hult 1998). It is envisaged that market environment plays an important role in the development of a market orientation. Levitt (1960) argues that as long as the firm operates in familiar, stable,

and predictable markets, it does not need to develop a market orientation. In fact, markets do not remain stable or predictable, so the firm has to become more adaptive to market changes while those who fail to do so simply die (Day 1990).

Selling to a foreign market involves high risks, arising from a lack of knowledge of and unfamiliarity with foreign environments. Different cultural systems could produce divergent business styles that are shaped by a nation's culture, language, geography, and history. This will cause difficulties for the easier connection of the flows of information and products between buyers and sellers (Hallen & Weidersheim 1990). A firm that wants to overcome such difficulties needs a thorough understanding of customers' environments. The appropriate way to obtain this knowledge is to be sensitive to partners' cultures because social and cultural factors determine the customer's actions. Consequently, it enables the firm to effectively provide offerings that the customer wants. In conclusion, it would seem that the greater the cultural differences between the partners, the more difficult it is to attain satisfactory and successful business relationships (e.g., Lee 1998).

One of the first business priorities of a market-oriented exporter is to satisfy customers' needs. It is believed that market orientation encompasses certain activities, such as collecting market information and intelligence on competitors, so that firms can adapt to the market in order to satisfy their customers. Similar to other market learning processes, a market-oriented exporter is more likely to develop skills by listening to, observing, and interacting with partners. The firm's interactions with customers refer to cultural rapport that is a function of cultural insights. This helps the market-oriented firm efficiently and effectively respond to customers' needs. It implies that building a close relationship with customers enhances better understanding of customers' needs. It is argued that market orientation, implicitly or explicitly, recognises the importance of taking into account cultural differences of foreign partners. This is likely to be especially important in the case of its impact on relationship quality between developing country exporters and developed country importers as the cultural differences are likely to be greater than if both parties were located in developed countries or in developing countries. This leads to the following hypothesis (see Figure 1):

H3: The greater the degree of a firm's market orientation, the greater the degree of its cultural sensitivity towards foreign partners.

Market orientation and information exchange

According Menon & Varadarajan (1992), environmental instability affects exporters' needs for, and use of information. Instability can arise from changes in customer preferences. Successful exporters tend to acquire more information on the market (Leonidou & Adams-Florou 1999). Market-oriented exporters need information to coordinate their activities in working relationships. Otherwise, frequent exchanges of information enable exporters to adapt their activities to customer requirements. In other words, market-oriented exporters are willing to share knowledge reciprocally about management abilities, market potential, and products.

Market-driven firms, i.e., those with strong market orientations, are superior to others with low market orientations in terms of market intelligence collection, and the capability of developing relationships with partners. Strong market oriented firms do a better job in

gathering information from the market and anticipating market requirements ahead of competition. Gathering information in the market can be achieved through listening to sales force suggestions, observing competition at trade shows, and developing stronger ties with innovative customers and suppliers (Dwyer & Tanner 1999). Based on the above, the following hypothesis (see Figure 1) is proposed:

H4: The greater the degree of a firm's market orientation, the greater the degree of its information exchange in a working relationship with foreign partners

Market orientation and relationship quality

Although significant progress has been made in the market orientation area, little research has investigated the relationship between market orientation and relationship quality. Additional research on market orientation "is critically needed" (Frazier 1999, 231). Simpson et al. (2001, 124) also noted that the effects of market orientation within a channels context "have been virtually ignored." Kalwani & Narayandas (1995) provide a basis for a connection between the two concepts of market orientation and relationship marketing. They emphasise that the key to the success of a business firm is to determine the needs and wants of its partners, and to satisfy these needs more effectively and efficiently than its competitors. It is argued that an exporter with a market-oriented manner will stimulate joint efforts or cooperation to achieve mutual and individual goals successfully (Stern & Reve 1980), and will discourage opportunistic behaviours. Channel members who are market oriented seek to put their partners' needs as a priority in organisational concerns (Deshpande et al. 1993).

Exporters' market orientation can affect trust, commitment, and satisfaction based on the external intelligence-gathering facet of market orientation. A market-oriented exporter collects information about foreign partners' needs, competitive tactics and strategies, market trends and developments. This necessitates greater communication with the partners. Thus, it can be argued that market orientation enables the exporter to increase the level of relationship quality by establishing superior value through responsiveness to customers' needs. As Siguaw et al. (1998, 104) note "the adoption of market-oriented behaviours appears to be a solid strategy for developing 'winning' channel alliances". Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed (see Figure 1):

H5: The greater the degree of a firm's market orientation, the greater the degree of relationship quality between the firm and its foreign partner.

Learning orientation

The fourth of factors that impact on relationship quality is that of learning orientation. The emergence of organisational learning as a critical strategy to achieve a competitive advantage is also evident in the marketing and international business literature (e.g., Hurley & Hult 1998; Slater & Narver 1995). Sinkular et al. (1997) propose three components of learning orientation – commitment to learning, shared vision, and open-mindedness. Building on the study conducted by Hult et al. (2000), this research defines learning orientation as the degree to which exporters stress the value of learning for the long-term benefits of exporter-importer relationships.

Learning orientation and cultural sensitivity

It is argued that all business firms in dynamic and turbulent environments must pursue the processes of learning (Slater & Narver 1995). In international marketing, relationship marketing manifests itself in the mode of operation and in the degree of internationalisation. Johanson & Vahlne's (1977) study shows that internationalisation of a firm is the process in which the firm gradually increases its international involvement by acquiring, integrating, and using knowledge about foreign markets. It implicitly mentions that such knowledge can be obtained through learning and interacting with foreign exchange partners. Research has proposed that psychic distance is predicted to decline with growing experience in the international arena (Stottinger & Schelegelmilch 1998). Going abroad requires additional learning on the part of the firm. Dealing with psychically distant markets would lead to higher learning needs and reduce the pace of globalisation for the firm (Keegan 1989). Although research emphasises the importance of learning in doing business abroad, the effect of learning orientation on cultural sensitivity in exporter-importer relationships has not been examined explicitly in the buyer-seller relationship literature.

When emphasising learning orientation as a sustainable competitive advantage, Sinkula (1994) mentions that learning, particularly generative learning, is typically forward-looking, which reduces the frequency and magnitude of major shocks. This implies that a firm with a high degree of learning orientation will not only gather and disseminate information about markets, but will consider how to adapt to foreign partners' cultures so as to reduce psychic distance between the focal firm and its exchange partners. On the other hand, because of this apparently inherent flexibility, the learning-oriented firm is likely to be aware of, and learn about, cultural differences in its partner's business and social practices. This is consistent with cultural theory that postulates that culture is learned, not innate. Cultural sensitivity, moreover, is not simply acquired by reading a book or attending firms' training programs. Cultural sensitivity takes time and effort to establish and develop. This involves an opening of the mind to different views of the world, as well as seeking a deeper understanding of one's own views of the world. Hurley & Hult (1998) suggest that being oriented toward learning indicates an appreciation for, and desire to, assimilate new ideas. Indeed, it has been argued that within uncertain market environments the ability to learn faster than competitors, and to apply this knowledge effectively, might be the only source of competitive advantage (Dixon 1992).

Cultural sensitivity is often equated with a general open-mindedness with respect to different cultures and the willingness to understand the ways in which cultures differ. Researchers found that foreign channel partners are often upset by an exporter who neglects cultural preferences, failing to treat its international partners as equal to its domestic partners (e.g., Kale & Barnes 1992). In contrast, manufacturers perceived by their partners to be behaving in a culturally sensitive manner are able to develop high quality and lasting relationships (Ford 1980). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed (see Figure 1):

H6: The greater the degree of a firm's learning orientation, the greater the level of cultural sensitivity towards its foreign partner's culture.

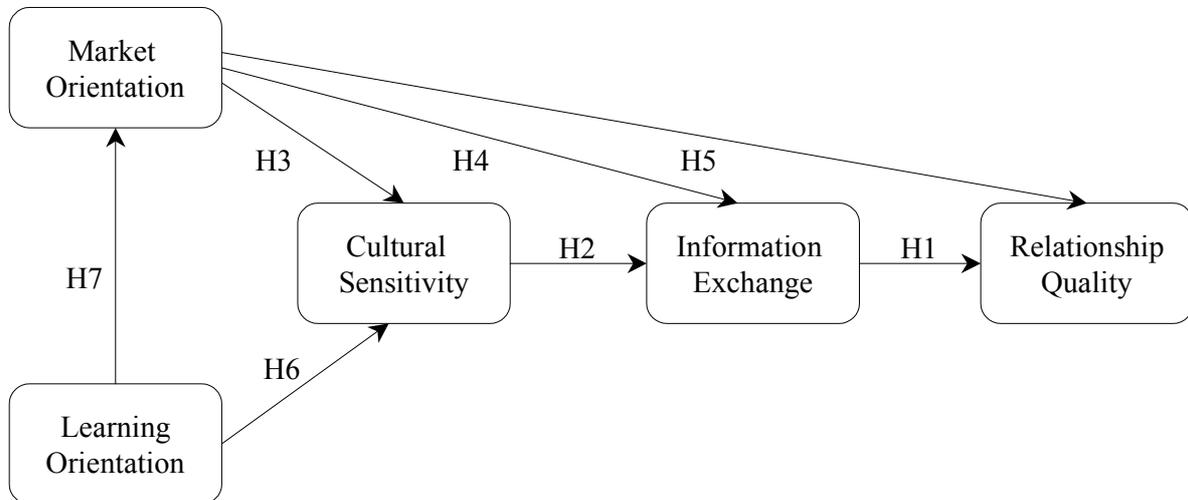
Learning orientation and market orientation

Although market orientation and learning orientation have positive effects on organisational behaviour, the two constructs are not identical (Baker & Sinkular 1999). Learning orientation is broader in scope than market orientation since the former focuses on both internal and external sources. Market orientation is based predominantly on observing customers and competitors beyond the boundaries of the firm. For example, Hamel & Prahalad (1994) argue that market orientation can limit a firm's focus to the expressed needs of customers and, therefore involves only adaptive learning. Such a firm would fail to pursue deep understanding of the latent needs of current and new customers.

Learning orientation can foster market-oriented behavior in an organisation (Jaworski & Kohli 1996). A key component of learning orientation is a firm's ability to engage in adaptive as well as generative learning (Slater & Narver 1995). This enables the firm to acquire, process, and subsequently use market intelligence, i.e., reflects its market orientation (Jaworski & Kohli 1996). Also, the learning-oriented firm is more likely to leverage the use of all resources, including the behaviours that accompany a market orientation (Baker & Sinkula 1999). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis, illustrated in Figure 1, is proposed:

H7: The greater the degree of learning orientation of a firm, the greater the degree of its market orientation.

Figure 1: A model of relationship quality and its antecedents



Method

The sample

In order to explore the relevance of the proposed model above to the quality of relationships between developing country exporters and developed country importers, Vietnam was selected as it is a developing country and one which is in a state of transition from being a centrally planned to becoming a market oriented economy. It is typical of those developing country markets in transition most likely to attract the attention of developed country importers because of their increased openness to trade, growth potential and increasing

levels of both skill and education. A systematic sample of 297 Vietnamese exporting firms in Ho Chi Minh City, was surveyed to test the theoretical model. Ho Chi Minh city was selected because it is the largest commercial centre where many exporting firms conduct their main business activities and have representative offices. Respondents were managers who are been in charge of exporting activities in firms. Partial self-administered questionnaires that were mailed to the respondents and then collected by interviewers were utilised.

Measurements

Cultural sensitivity (CSEN) was measured by using LaBahn & Harich (1997) scale. CSEN consists of 8 items. Four items of information exchange (INFEX) developed by Heide and John (1990) were used. Learning orientation (LENOR) consists of 3 dimensions, i.e., commitment to learning (lco, 4 items), open-mindedness (lop, 3 items), and shared vision (lsv, 4 items). The LENOR scale developed by Sinkula et al. (1997) was used. Market orientation (MKOR) was measured by using Narver & Slaters' (1990) scale. Market orientation comprises 3 components, customer focus (mcs, 8 items), competitor focus (mcm, 4 items), and inter functional coordination (mco, 5 items). Finally, relationship quality (RQUAL) is a second-order construct with 4 first-order ones, i.e., trust (TRUST), commitment (COMIT), satisfaction (SATIS), and minimal opportunism (MOPP). Twenty two items of trust, i.e., honesty (hon, 12 items) and benevolence (ben, 10 items) developed by Kumar et al., (1995) were used in this paper. Commitment (COMIT) was measured by using Kim and Frazier (1997)'s scale. Commitment comprises 3 components, i.e., continuance commitment (con, 6 items), behavioural commitment (beh, 10 items), and affective commitment (aff, 7 items). The satisfaction scale (SATIS) developed by Gaski and Nevin (1985) was used. The satisfaction scale consists of seven items. Minimal opportunism (MOPP) was measured by using Lee's (1998) scale. This scale comprises 13 items.

The questionnaire was initially prepared in English and then translated into Vietnamese by an academic expert who is fluent in both languages. Back translation was undertaken to ensure the equivalence of meanings.

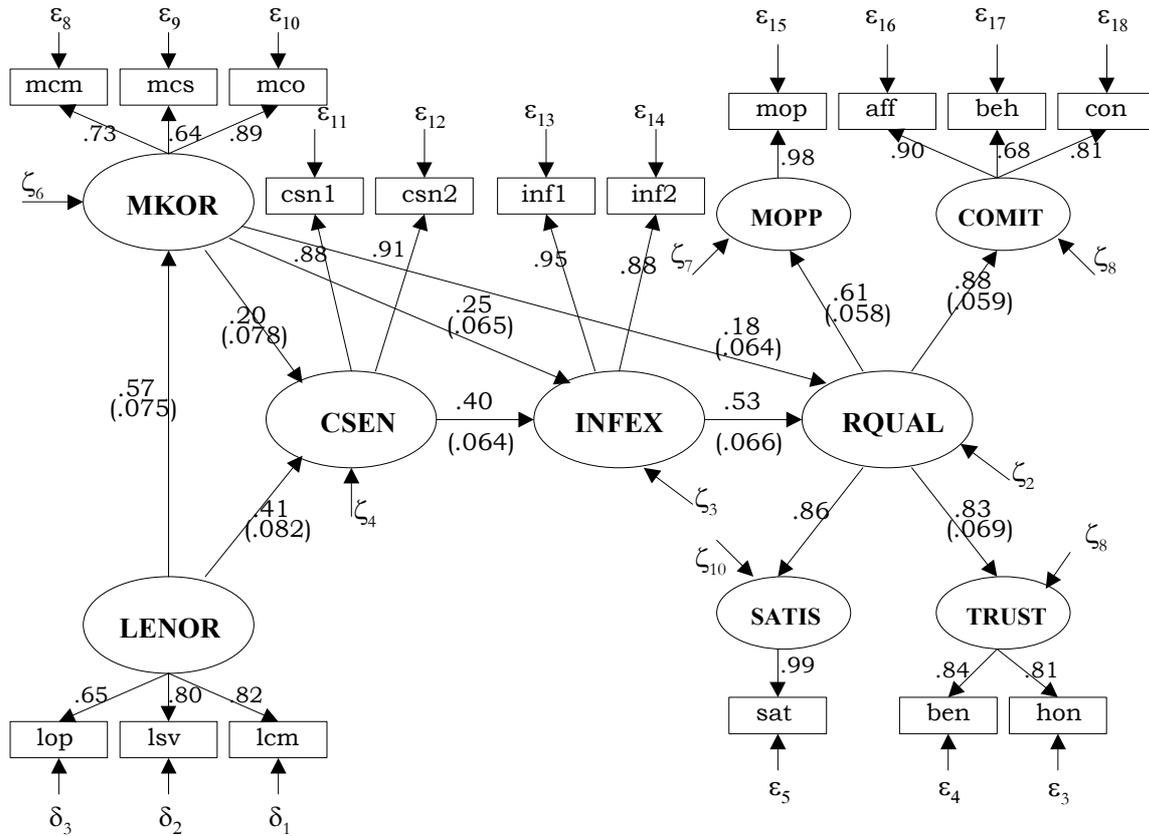
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data was analysed by using covariance structure modelling via the AMOS_4 program. All measures used were first refined via Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis and then tested by confirmatory factor analysis. The results show that all these measures achieve satisfactory levels of validity (reliability, unidimensionality, convergent, and discriminant validity). Some items of these measures (TRUST, MOPP, and COMIT scales) were deleted due to low factor loadings in the exploratory analysis. Summates was used to run the structural equation models¹.

A synthesis of the detailed analysis undertaken indicates that the proposed model has an acceptable fit to the data (Chi-square = 134.29, df = 110, p = .06, CFI = .991, GFI = .948, RMSEA = .027). In addition, it revealed that all of the hypotheses are supported. This is shown in Figure 2.

¹ Detail analysis and the covariance/correlation matrix will be provided if requested.

Figure 2: Structural results



1. Chi square = 134.29, df = 110, p = .06, CFI = .991, GFI = .948, RMSEA = .027
2. Numbers in brackets are standard errors, all paths have p ≤ 0.01

Conclusions and implications

The hypotheses tested derived from earlier research undertaken on relationship quality for the most part between firms within developed countries. This present research has tested these hypotheses as they might apply to exporters and importers - specifically between developing country exporters and developed country importers. The results of this study have a number of implications. Firstly, the significant linkages between market orientation, information exchange, and relationship quality are important for exporters. An exporter who perceives that relationship quality is of benefit would be well advised to adopt a market-oriented approach towards foreign markets. Market orientation is an influential force that drives exporters to build and maintain strong relationships with their foreign partners. The exporter's efforts to satisfy a partner would result in the partner's beliefs that the exporter is expert in performing its obligations and behaves in the best interests of its import partner. Therefore, the import partner is likely to trust and commit to a working relationship with the exporter. The findings indicate that adopting a market orientation is a useful strategy for the exporting firm when aiming to strengthen business ties with foreign partners in competitive environments. The results also indicate that failure to be market-oriented in export relationships is likely to lead to suboptimal results. Exporting firms, particularly those exhibiting low market orientation, may find it hard to deal with competent foreign customers. Senior managers should be encouraged to foster a market orientation approach.

Secondly, information exchange positively influences the quality of relationships between exporters and importers. Frequent information exchange allows the partners to understand each other's goals and resources, as well as each other's limitations. The expectation of obtaining information in an ongoing relationship enables both partners to cope better with internal processes and external market conditions (Heide & John 1992). Thirdly, information exchange can be improved through sensitising to foreign culture. However, knowledge of a foreign culture is easily attainable, but adaptation requires practice and a willingness to change ones' behaviour. Thus, exporters should be prepared to adapt towards foreign cultures to improve the exchange of information of foreign partners. Finally, the study also indicates that learning orientation is a potential predictor of cultural sensitivity. Also, learning orientation fosters the market-oriented approach. Therefore, exporters should create and nurture a learning environment in firms.

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, generalisability of the findings to other settings must be undertaken with the utmost caution because only one city in one developing country was sampled. Replication and extension to other developing countries is a direction for future research. Secondly, limitations relate to the examination of the relationship from only one side of the dyad, the exporters. Establishment of the validity of the hypotheses is limited by the single model viewed from only the exporter side. Future research should consider the use of dyad information. Finally, the cross-sectional design employed inhibits strong inference regarding the direction of the causal relationships of the constructs. Longitudinal research designs would better enable researchers to make inferences about the causal sequence.

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