

**The role of researcher in explaining from context
(Lesson from BtoB relationships in the Indonesian banana supply chains)**

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Abstract

Successor of interpretive sense-making, contextualized explanation is an emerging approach to theorizing from case studies underpinned by the fact that the context greatly influences findings from case studies. The extant literature on contextualized explanations includes studying the role of a researcher and therefore, this methodological paper attempts to show how an understanding of the context allowed the researcher to identify relevant theoretical concepts in order to explain it and develop new knowledge. The paper is based on a case study of the banana supply chain in Indonesia which takes into account the business-to-business relationships between chain members. To capture the rich and dynamic context of our study and address contextual characteristics such as cultural norms and beliefs as well as socio-economic transformations, we adopted the process research of complex social relationships. The paper confirms findings from the previous studies that the researcher's proactive engagement with and within the case allowed a better understanding of what questions to ask and "where to look for them" (Van de Ven, 1992). The study further shows that the researchers' role in data interpretation and analysis allowed to discover the specific phenomena of the relationships among multiple actors of the chain which otherwise would not be detectable.

Key words: banana supply chain, b2b relationships, contextualized explanation, Indonesia, multiple case studies.

Introduction

Banana supply chain consists of three or more actors: a farmer, an intermediary, and a retailer. Some chains have only one intermediary while others may have more than one intermediary such as collectors and wholesalers. The banana supply chains represent is a complex network. It consists of several supply chains overlapping with each other because member of one supply chain also involve in other supply chains. For example, a collector is the buyer of several farmers or several collectors sell to one wholesaler. Commonly, farmers sell their bananas to collectors who then deliver the bananas to wholesalers or retailers. Wholesalers then sell the bananas to retailers in wet markets. Some retailers in wet market sell their good quality of bananas to supermarket channels.

The previous studies on the Indonesian banana supply chains have reported that the Indonesian banana supply chains is characterized many factors such as many cultivars of more than 20 varieties, lack of capital at the farmer level, poor information flow, poor infrastructure, poor postharvest handling and low technology application (Rifiantara, 2013; Setyajit et al., 2003; Yuniarti & Santoso, 2005). In terms of business-to-business relationships, it was reported that the relationships along the chains have various degree of trust and commitment (Obeth & Dunne, 2008) and highly influenced by the local culture (Singgih & Woods, 2004). However there has been no study that discusses the process of relationship management in depth. This is the gap that the study was about to fill.

This leads to the decision to make this research a qualitative study, in order to capture the complexity of b2b relationships in the banana supply chains. The same approach was used by (Yin, 1981) to study the complex relationships between management supports, organizational communications, and a lean manufacturing implementation. Gummesson (2005) stated that marketing or business decision are influenced by unpredicted and complex environments that the use of qualitative approach is required to understand the effect of such dynamic environments on a firm's business decision.

Qualitative approach has been used extensively across various areas of study to build, refine, test, apply, and contextualize theory, as it enables researchers to discover the importance of a hitherto neglected phenomenon or to emphasise relevance of a particular theoretical perspective to that phenomenon (Doz, 2011). Qualitative approach stimulates a deeper thought by providing a rich and thick description of the real phenomena and illustration of actions and constant comparison between rich data and emerging conceptual insights related to existing theory which lead to shaping or developing new theoretical insights (Weick, 1989, 2007).

The main advantage of qualitative approach is its unique ability to answer the 'who', 'how' and 'why' questions. For example, Aharoni (1966), in studying the decision-making process of US' foreign domestic investment in Israel based on financial and economic analysis, was successful to disclose the organizational processes including the 'who', 'how' and 'why' of individual and collective organized actions as these activities unfold overtime. Moreover, Patton (2002) argues that qualitative approach enables flexible design in the field of research that involved working with group of people in dynamic circumstances. Thus, he develops qualitative evaluation that allows systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs to assess effectiveness of programs. He contends that qualitative methods the researcher is able to communicate the stories of participants of the program and therefore, unfold the program's story (Patton, 2002).

However, due to its small sample size, qualitative study is often criticized by the lack of rigour because its findings cannot be generalised. Every qualitative study needs to ask whether the sampling strategy is theoretically comprehensive to ensure the generalizability of the conceptual analyses (Mays & Pope, 1995). Generalizability is one of the essential validity criteria of any study (Marshall, 1990). Generalization across populations, context and time is the external validity of a research (Birnberg, Shields, & Young, 1990).

Nevertheless, Siggelkow (2007), using the life of Pheneas Gage, argues that one organisation can stand as a unique case by itself, representing its distinctive circumstances and therefore, there is no need to collect representative samples. On the other side, Hartley (1994) argues that the knowledge about the processes underlying a behaviour and its context can help to specify the condition under which the behaviour can be expected to occur. This means the generalisation is about theoretical proposition instead of population because as Maxwell (1992) stated that generalizability is based on the assumption that the theory may be useful in making sense of similar persons or situations. This resembles the analytical generalization that is based on close iterations between existing and emerging theory and empirical findings in accordance with some replications or extension logic (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lindsay, 1995; Yin, 1981, 2003). In other words, qualitative study can be generalized to the theory rather than population as Yin (1994) puts it that separated from statistical generalization, analytical generalisation is the generalization from the empirical observation to theory, rather than a population. This implies the crucial role of a researcher to extract the key information from the specific context of the real life and relate it to the existing theory to finally refine the existing theory.

Qualitative studies require researchers to deal with complex contexts and the role of a researcher is crucial in explaining and informing the context. Set in the context of the Indonesian banana supply chain, this paper aims to demonstrate how the understanding of the context allowed the researcher to identify relevant theoretical concepts to interpret the context. Thus, the paper is structured as follows: it starts with the argument for using a qualitative study. The next section presents the argument for focusing on a single case study. This follows by review of the role of the context and the role of the researcher and description of the chosen methods of data collection. Finally, the research process of making sense of relevant theoretical concepts links the information from the case study in order to explain in context. The paper concludes by summarizing the study contributions, limitations, and possibility of future research.

Case studies in qualitative research

A case study method has been used extensively in qualitative studies to gain an understanding of complex social phenomenon in real-life contexts such as individual life cycles, international relationships, managerial processes, industrial growth, and organizational behaviour where several elements and multiple dimensions of a subject need to be studied comprehensively (Banbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). A case study can be designed as multiple cases or a single case.

Multiple case studies are suitable for investigation seeking to identify contingent factors that distinguish one case from another, for example, as used by Johnsen and Ford (2006) who examined eight case studies of interaction of small suppliers with larger

customers. Besides that, multiple case studies are also used by other researcher assess the implementation of a concept in different settings (Nonthaleerak & Hendry, 2008), to validate a priori model and measures derived from the literature (Bandara, Gable, & Rosemann, 2005) or formulate research strategy to address the impacts of a phenomenon (Kompier, Cooper, & Geurts, 2000). The application of multiple case studies provides the external validity of the study with regards to the replication of the findings (Johnsen & Ford, 2006; Leonard-Barton, 1990; Yin, 2003) .

Using multiple case studies may cause unique reporting problems due to the large sample size because a researcher will need to balance cross-case summary with rich quotes (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Analysing multiple case studies requires researcher's to focus more on cross-case information presented, for instance in cross-case tables (Matthyssens & Faes, 1985) which may lead to the risk of losing the richness of individual cases in favour of data saturation (Stake, 2005).

Single case studies, on the other hand, enable researcher to immerse into the intricate rich details of the case which not only bring up crucial variables, but also inspire new ideas (Siggelkow, 2007). Similarly, Yin (2003) also states that a single case study fits for research that seeks to capture circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation or to represent a unique and critical case that might represent significant contribution to the knowledge and theory building.

Regardless of using multiple or single cases, there are three main characteristics of a good case study: a good story, an actor-based conceptualization and comprehensive conceptual maps and frameworks of a process (Doz, 2011). A good story needs to cover important activities and interactions, an actual process, antecedents and consequences of activities of the research participants. It may appear in a form of a thick description which includes stories of various actors telling their perspective of the event under observation (Maanen, 1988). Based on a rich thick and rich description one can develop categories of the process before construct the concepts upon which the conceptual maps and frameworks for theory building are based on (Doz, 2011).

According to Piekkari, Plako & Wel (2010), a good case is very dependent on the author's philosophical assumption and understanding of the relationship between theory and empirical observation. This highlights the crucial role of the researcher in producing a good case study. Equally important issue in producing a good case study according to Doz (2011) is the role of researcher in understanding the study context. Doz (2011) states that linguistic issues, interviewing skills and circumstances might differ significantly across cultures and, at the most basic level, language and cultural norms may require specific contextual sensitivity and perceptual acuity on the part of the researcher (Doz 2011). This implies that a cultural context in international research significantly affect the good story of a case study and the extent the context influences the story depends heavily on the capability of the researcher.

The role of context

The context of a qualitative case study plays an important role in improving the quality of a case study. It sets the boundary of the proposed conceptual argument. Siggelow (2007) states that a conceptual argument of a case study should stand on its own that one cannot pursue the readers to believe in the new theory for instance, A leads to B based on the

example provided, rather, one needs to convince the reader that the conceptual argument is plausible and use the case as additional justification for the argument. In line with that, in their study on the interaction capabilities of smaller supplier relationships with larger customers, Johnsen and Ford (2006) maintain that their finding cannot be generalized into other situations than those investigated in their study, however, similar research may be conducted but in a different context.

Similarly, Abelson et al. (2007), who conducted a comparative study on public participation in health-care decision making in five Canadian provinces, found that generic public participation can be implemented in a variety of contexts with considerable success as long as it is implemented according to the contextual attributes which are the characteristics of the issue of interest, the culture of the sponsoring organization and attributes of the decision being made.

These authors (Abelson et al., 2007) concluded that contexts exert fostering and inhibiting influences that contribute to the more (or less) successful implementation which implies that the attributes of a context influence the design and outcome of public participation process. This shows that in social research that requires involvement of individual, researchers must considerably take into account the characteristics of the context since the contextual characteristics affect researchers' decision in formulating research questions, planning the methods, deciding who are the respondents, figuring out the access to the respondents, generating data from respondents, analysing the data and presenting the outcome of the research.

The contextual features shape the framework of research and determine the appropriate research tools because every context of a study has its own unique features. In their comparison study between Indonesian and Australian banana supply chains, Singgih and Woods (2004) used Hofstede's power distance and individualism dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) to investigate the effect of culture on both chains. They found that Australia scores 36 and Indonesia 78 for power index dimension while for individualism Australia scores 90 and Indonesia 14. Based on these results, the authors (Singgih & Woods, 2004) concluded that although the supply chain management concept was born and has been widely applied in western countries, applying it in transitional economies requires a re-design to better fit the socio-cultural conditions of the chosen context of study (Singgih & Woods, 2004).

The influence of contexts on the research framework is not only seen on a big scale such as one country to another, rather it can also appear in the same context of different timeframe. This is shown in the Partanen and Möller's study (2012). These authors found the need to alter their research tool after the third stage of the investigation. They first created the tool based on value creating system approach then revised it into the value-activity-based approach after seeing the how the value activities within the company evolve in time (Partanen & Möller, 2012).

The role of researcher

A researcher is a vital instrument of any research. It is where the research starts, what makes it evolve, and where it completes. During the research process, researchers constantly make decisions which direct the research. At the first stage, researchers decide the formulation of research questions. Later decide what methodology and method to use,

including who or what to be the sample of the study. This is followed by the figuring out how to access these samples and generate valuable data from them. Finally, choosing the best way to present the results (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007).

Moreover, it is the role of researcher to analyse data and develop theories. There are alternatives of developing from case studies which concisely summarized by (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011). There are four methods proposed in theory building from case studies. While the first three methods – inductive theory building, natural experiment, and interpretive sense making - are well recognized, the fourth – contextualised explanation is recently introduced to better capture the two important features of case study - generating causal explanation and incorporating context (Welch et al., 2011).

Contextualised explanation method proceed from the belief that in order to comprehend reality, it is necessary to understand the causal power of actors involved in given social structure that through which researcher can understand and explain the phenomena. The causal explanation needs to consider not only human intentionality, but also actors' position in the given structure. This can be done in three steps: tracing process to create causal chain evidence, classifying observed events into broader phenomena, and referencing the phenomena to existing theory (Bhaskar, 1998; Roberts, 1996; Welch et al., 2011)

Methods

The data was collected through two stages, the pilot study and the main study. The pilot study was performed to identify the main challenges and problem in the Indonesian banana supply chain. East Kalimantan province was selected as the pilot study location because it the biggest banana production of all provinces in Kalimantan Island producing over 100.000 tons of banana every year. The decision to conduct the pilot study in one province is based on the limited time frame and researcher's limited access were the pilot study conducted in more than one province. Participants were selected through snowball sampling. Retailers were asked to name their supplier and researcher went to find and interview them. Selection of retailers considered the fact that bananas are sold through two different type or retailers, modern and traditional, which signify different supply chain management. In the pilot study, 2 modern retailer (supermarkets), 1 traditional retailer (wet market), and 2 intermediaries were interviewed using open-ended interview since it enabled complete and free flow of information from the participants. Participants were asked of three issues: (1) how they select their partners, (2) how they coordinate, and (3) the present issues or challenges they face. Findings show that different dyads in a chain have different relationship management. For instance, in the supermarket - first intermediary dyad, commitment means the ability of intermediary to provide bananas that only meet customer's strict specification whereas in first intermediary –second intermediary dyad, commitment means the faithfulness of supply and receive all bananas regularly despite the variation of quality. Although commitment in both dyads are different, both are influenced by external factor, competition, which participants referred to as one of the main challenges they face due

to another external factor, volatile production. Findings from the pilot study confirm that relationships are managed in various ways in response to uncertainties or market dynamics.

The findings from the pilot study made a researcher to simultaneously do four things: formulating the case study, adjust the literature reviews, determining the variables, and constructing questionnaire for data collection. Case study was developed with the objective to understand how the supply chain actors manage the b2b relationship in response to uncertainties. Literature reviews were developed in order to determine important variables which used to develop questionnaires.

The case study is then aim to understand how the actors in the supply chains manage their business-to-business relationships in a dynamic environment caused by uncertainties. The case study is set to be a single case study with four different supply chains in four different provinces. This enable researcher to capture the richness of the study and gain deeper insights of the topic. On the other hand, the theory on dynamic environment was added to the existing theory of the study, which later will be needed in analysing the data.

The case study stages of our study mirror what (Birnberg et al., 1990) used in his study to explore the problems with radical process innovation. He used the case study approach which enables him to raise critical issues regarding the implementation of first flexible manufacturing system. By doing a case study through interviews with individuals in various hierarchical levels and function in a single firm, he was able to identify two capital alternatives and three types of managerial control for flexible manufacturing systems. The use of case study enable researchers to analyse data simultaneously and incrementally with data collection which then allow the researchers to amend the construct and their relationships as additional data collected (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2011).

Data collection

Data was collected through open-ended interviews with the participants of the study using the questionnaires. Open-ended interview is a powerful tool to gather qualitative data. This method of data collection allowed us to explore relevant topics within the context of study and clarify the information that participants gave. This decision about the chosen method proved to be very useful in a qualitative study conducted by Bryant (2006). In her study on employees' response to organisational change, open-ended questions allowed the researcher not only to gather qualitative information but also to clarify participants' stories. As such, the researcher could guide the direction of her research and explore the topics that may not have been considered or expected based on the literature (Lindsay, 1995).

The interviews were done in 4 different provinces, West Java, Lampung, South Sulawesi, and East Kalimantan. West Java is consistently the number one banana producer in Indonesia. Lampung has been consistently in top five over the last 10 years although it sat in seventh spot prior to that. South Sulawesi also in the top 10 of the list and what makes this province stands out is the fact that it is the only province in Sulawesi island that produce over 100.000 tons of banana each year. East Kalimantan, although it doesn't make it to the top 10, it also an important banana central as it produce over 100.000 tons of banana annually from time to time. Each of these selected provinces represent four different islands, West Java representing Java island, Lampung for Sumatra island, South Sulawesi for Sulawesi island, and East Kalimantan for Kalimantan island. Although the selected provinces are in different

rank of the list, each one of them is the biggest banana producer among other provinces in its island (Statistics-Indonesia, 2013).

Overall, 4 modern retailers, 6 traditional retailers, 4 intermediaries, and 10 farmers were interviewed. Participants were selected through the combination of random selection and snowball process. In random selection, researcher visited banana retailers from different markets in the city and asked their willingness to participate. If they agreed to participate, researcher then asked their willingness to provide the contact person and number of the participants' suppliers or customers. Based on that, researcher then tried to arrange an interview with these suppliers and customers if they were willing to.

The interviews with every participant were conducted in informal setting either in participants' house or work and recorded with a voice recorder. Most of the interviews with the participants were conducted at the same time the participants work to serve their customers. This provided the researcher to directly observe how the participants transact with their business partners. In a very rare situation, researcher even had a chance to video-record of the transaction process.

Participants have different characteristics shaped by ethnicity, social norm, language, and education level which affect the way they understand the questions during interview. Consequently, we had to reword or paraphrase the questions right on the spot according to participants' characteristics in order to make them comfortable.

Data analysis

The first step in data analysis is transcription since the interviews were conducted in Indonesian language. Participants told their stories in informal everyday language and intonation. Transcription of such voice needed careful attention to distinguish between expressions in order to determine where to put the commas and where to put the full stops. Ambiguous transcription will lead to misleading translation and automatically incorrect interpretation. Therefore In order to avoid misinterpretation in later stage, the interviewer should do the transcription.

Data analysis was simultaneously done with data translation, data interpretation. As transcription was translated, interpretation process walked alongside. In the interpretation process, any notion or new phenomena associated with the data being translated was immediately recorded in recorded in the journal. These notions could relate to missing details, other data, theoretical framework, and new concepts. Any missing details were listed so the researchers can recover it by contacting the participants again since researchers have gained approval participants' approval to contact them either by phone or in person anytime should any additional information was needed. Any interesting or new phenomena arising from data was discussed among the research team to identify relevant theoretical concepts and whether it is necessary to modify the theoretical framework accordingly.

Data was analysed deeper in order to capture the rich and dynamic context of the study by adopting the process research of complex social relationship proposed by Van de Ven (1992), in particular, the defining the meaning of process. The processes are defined through three steps: (1) determining the antecedent and outcomes variables and determine the logic link between the variables, (2) identifying the category of concepts of the variables based on the actions of the participants, and (3) creating the sequence of actions that describe

how things evolve over time in order to understand the complex processes (Van de Ven, 1992).

Step 1: Determining antecedents & outcome variables.

Independent and dependent variables were developed from issues generated from a pilot study. The findings of pilot study indicated that the actors manage their b2b relationships in a way to reduce the impact of dynamic environment. Dynamic environment includes unpredictable external factors (weather) which influence production, unpredictable of demand which lead to marketing risk, and underdeveloped infrastructures that leads to high logistic risk. As such, the dynamic environment made the independent variable and the relationship management as independent variable.

Step 2: Developing categories of concepts of the variables

Categories of concepts were developed based on the actors' response during the interviews. Actors' responses were very rich that even in one sentences, we could identify two or three categories. Figure 1 shows how we identify categories for one of the relationship variable, commitment. Participants were asked of their opinion on relationship commitment, what commitment is to them, how they are committed and why they are committed to the relationship. Our actual study covers many issues in relationship management such as commitment, trust, satisfaction, partner's selection, and opportunism that we cannot include in this paper due to space limitation. Therefore, we raise only one relationship variable.

We were able to develop the categories because of three reasons. First, the interviews were conducted in main researcher's native language, which allows the researcher to fully understand the emotions or feelings of the actors. Secondly, the interview transcription was English-translated by the main researcher herself to avoid any misinterpretation of actors' actions. Actors did not converse in formal language; rather they conveyed their stories in informal language, fragmented sentences, body languages, symbols, facial expressions, and local dialect. Thus, handling such kind of transcription to a professional translator for translation will only lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Nevertheless, for validation and verification purpose, the Indonesian and English versions of each of actors' quotes are accessible for readers. Lastly, the interviews were conducted in actors' working place and interviewer were part of that working environment. This allowed interviewer to observe how actors interacted and negotiated with their suppliers and buyers, loaded and unloaded banana for distribution process, communicated with their competitors who's kiosk are just next to them, and maintain their storage. These first hand observations are very useful for us to support and confirm our interpretation of data.

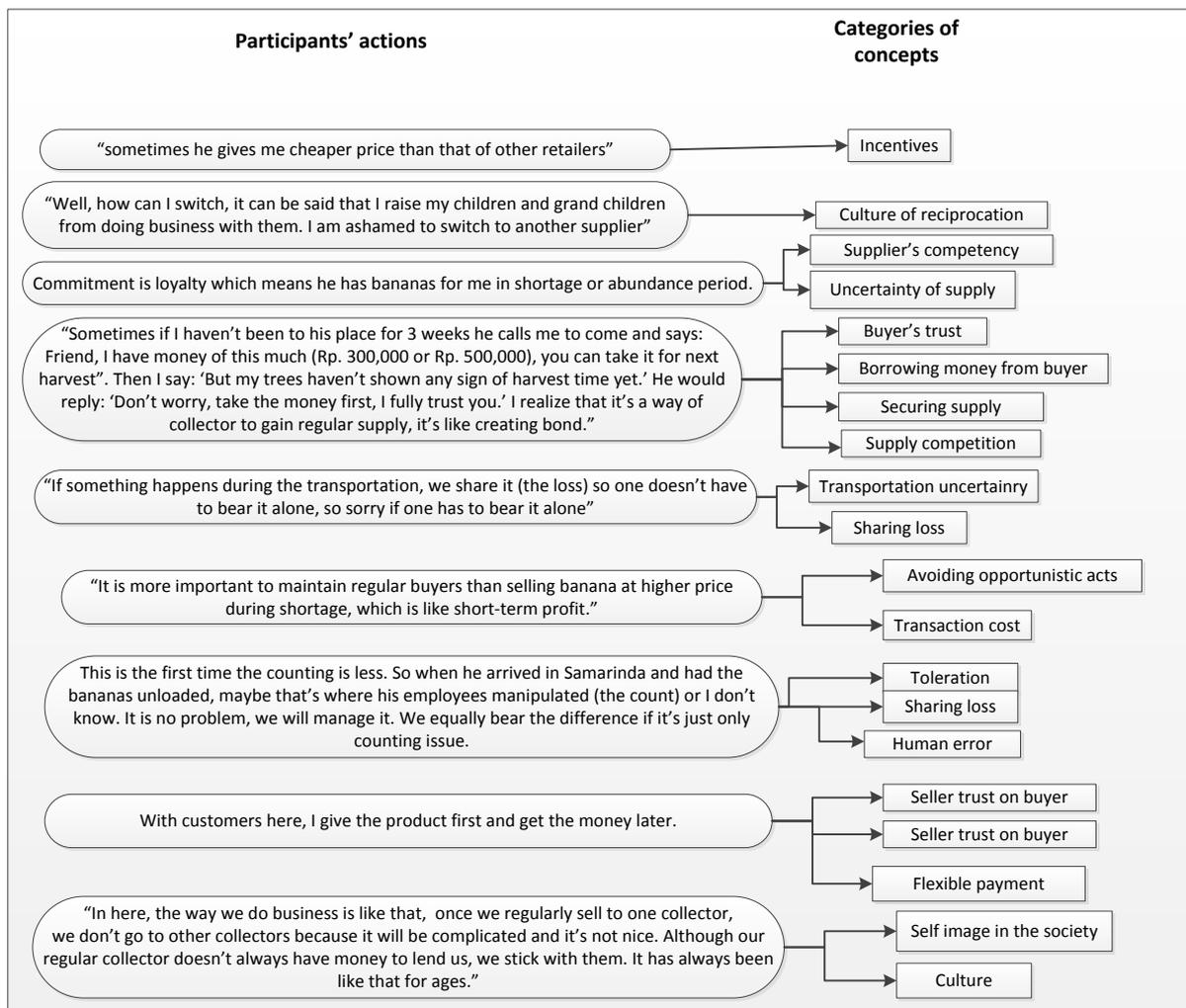


Figure 1 Categories Development of Commitment Variable

Step 3: Sequence of actions

Sequences of events are developed based on the concept categories to map the process of why and how uncertainties shape the commitment in the business-to-business relationships. As shown in Figure 2, uncertainties are the independent variables and the level of commitment is the dependent variable. How uncertainties affect the growth of commitment is shown the processes. Uncertainty of supply makes actors to trust their partners by lending their supplier money which then lead to partner's commitment. On the other side, the uncertainty of demand makes actors avoid acting opportunistically in order to maintain the relationship commitment and trust their buyers by allowing flexible payment which also lead partner's commitment. Meanwhile, the uncertainty of transportation which potentially causes waste makes actors tolerate each other by sharing the loss which then lead to partner's commitment. In addition to these findings, we also found other factors that lead actors to commit to their partner regardless of the uncertainties in the environment. These factors are culture and reciprocation.

At this stage, the refining of literature reviews of the final project report is still going. The new finding of the effect of culture and reciprocation made us to add the theory of culture and reciprocation to our literature reviews.

Arranging the sequences of event to determine which event leads to which needs a proper understanding of the context. What we mean by understanding the context is the ability to understand the culture which allows us to understand the way the actors think. Being brought up in the same culture with the actors, the main author surely has used similar way of thinking in a different life context during her course of life. Thus enable the main author to understand the reasons behind the actors' actions.

Another factor that allows us to interpret the relationship between each category is the fact the interviews were conducted in actor's working environment where interviewer could witness the way actors interact with their business partners. These forms of interactions include the verbal language (formal or informal), body language, the jokes, the type of information shared, the intense of the topic discussed, etc. All these valuable things helped interviewer to confidently understand actor's actions to develop the categories of concept followed by interpretation of the relationships of the categories.

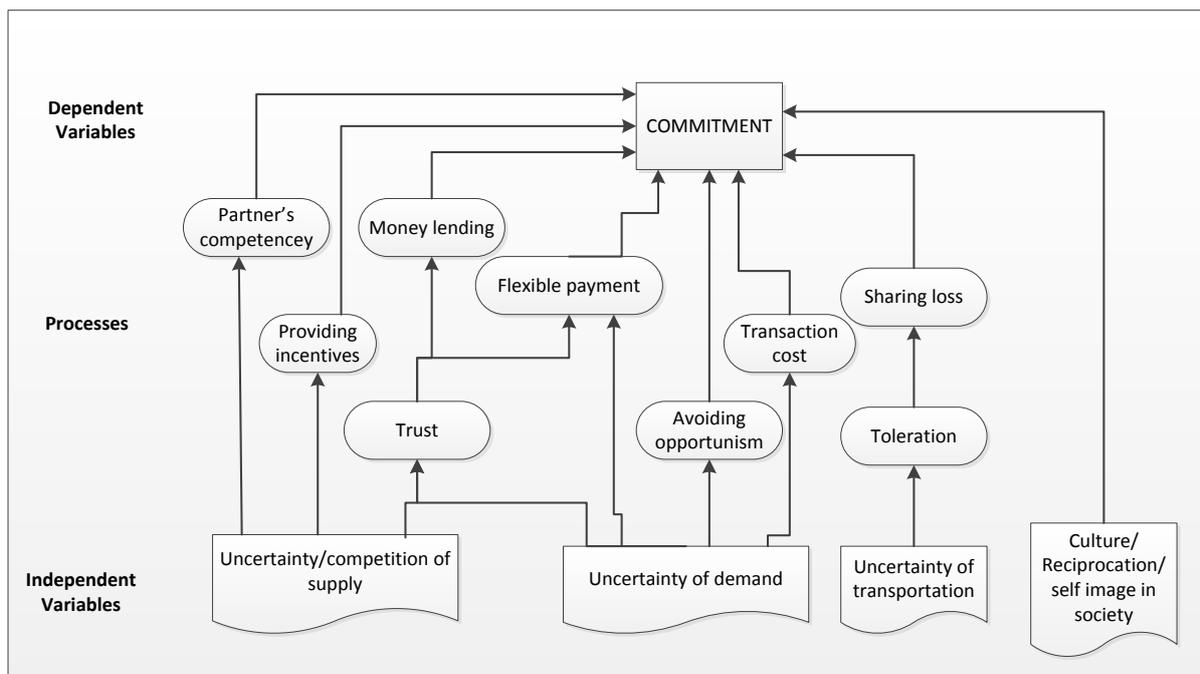


Figure 2. The process of Commitment Variable

Discussion and conclusion

This paper was focused on contextualised explanation which is used to analyse causal mechanism to develop theory. In this paper contextualised explanation was used by researchers to study business-to business relationships in the banana supply chains. This paper confirmed the argument of Bhaskar (1998) who argues that causality can be understood only with reference to the unobservable causal mechanism. Our preliminary findings are aligned with the arguments of Welch and her co-authors (Welch et al., 2011) that the complexity of causal mechanism is influenced by the context in which it operates and its

effect is uncertain. Thus developing causal explanation using mere observations is not sufficient. The researcher needs to ‘dig beyond the realm of the observable phenomena in order to understand the nature or the key characteristics of the object being observed (Collier, 1994). As such, conducting a ‘one-off’ observation doesn’t provide sufficient ground to develop causal explanation. Consequently, to reduce the uncertain effect of the relationships of causal mechanism and fully understand the causality, researcher conduct longitudinal study as it allows researcher to understand the dynamic of the process over time and analyse the phenomena through process approach. As our stage used only two stages for collection of data, the next step would be to extend this study to a longitudinal one, similarly to the study by Halinen, Törnroos and Elo (2013) who introduced an event-based approach to analyse the dynamic nature of business network through three steps: of process: (1) identification of events through retrospective and real-time analysis, (2) events in describing process dynamics, and (3) events in revealing process patterns. Longitudinal studies allows researcher to explain the causal relationship of variables from the context through sequences of events in different points of time.

Alternatively, our study can be further enhanced by using the process approach to understand the relationships and network development. According to (Van de Ven, 1992) process can also be viewed as explanation for causal mechanism can only be explained by process story or logic. Researcher who understands the logic well can explain the process although the study is not a longitudinal one. In order to do this, the researcher must be part of the context. Drawing from the Indonesian banana supply chain study, being part of the context has allowed researcher to develop causal mechanism through the two steps. First, researcher was able to approach and interview actors who live in remote areas and modify the questions delivery in accordance to actors’ characteristics and local dialect to collect the right data (Van de Ven, 1992). Secondly, researcher can understand the reasons of actor’s action in context and thus develop logic relationship between each category. This is made possible because being part of the context, researcher has actually experience the nature logic behind the process. This enable researcher to explain in context the causal mechanism of observed phenomena and develop theories from that. The advantage of being part of the context where the study is conducted also aligned with the study by Partanen and Möller (2012) who developed the model of building a strategic network in ICT sector. This study was drawing on the experience of the key author who has worked in the corporation used as the object of the study and not only had access to company’s internal and confidential data, but also experienced the impact of the network development process in real time. Similarly, as in the study by Partanen and Möller (2012), the current study has examined the process of operating of the banana supply chains from the internal positioning in this network. This allowed to observe the linkages and get knowledge from a position of an “insider” that would not be possible to obtain otherwise. The data gathered in the current study allowed to identify actions of actors in the banana supply chain as well as specific characteristics of their relationship and their mutual influences and interdependences.

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