Cross Cultural Business Relationship Development: From The Turkish Point of View: Analysis of Turkish Manufacturing SMEs

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to:

*My Mother- **Zeynep Tek***

*My Father- **Mehmet Tek***

*My Brother- **Osman Tek***

Without their love, encouragement and understanding, this thesis would not be made possible

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List of Terms

- B2B Business to Business
- B2C Business to Customer
- BBC British Broad Casting
- BR Business Relationship
- BRD Business Relationship Development
- EU European Union
- GDP Gross Domestic Product
- IMF International Monetary Found
- MENA The Middle East and North Africa
- OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- SMEs Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
- TIM Turkish Manufacturing Association
- UK United Kingdom
- WB World Bank

Declaration

The author declared that this thesis is completely -by my own work and without any help or assistance from anyone except where the researcher has consulted various books, journal articles, interviews (Questions and Answers), and websites. This is fully acknowledged and attributed with any direct quotations indicated by use of quotation marks. The author is fully aware of the university regulations including plagiarism. In addition, the researcher mindful of the severity of the penalties imposed by the University on those found responsible of plagiarism.

Signed …

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

It is incontestable that building business relationships remains a crucial aspect of trade. Since the dawning of civilisation, human societies have grown and expanded mainly through contact facilitated by trade. Relationships that arise from this, continue to define us both socially and economically. In today's globalised world, businesses wrangle to gain a source of competitive advantage, turning to technology, innovation and resources in their bid to survive the demands of 21st Century markets. An oft overlooked means through which this can be achieved is the development of business relationships. These relationships are not without their challenges however are compounded when trade is conducted across borders and cultures. Based on this therefore the aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gap in literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish manufacturing SMEs.

To address this aim, the study relies on 25 participants from the Small to Medium Enterprise manufacturing sector in Istanbul. Using semi-structured interviews, the opinions of the sample group who encompass company owners, sales managers or international business department managers are collected. The research sample offer insights into the challenges they have experienced whilst establishing, developing and maintaining cross-cultural business relationships.

On the basis of the primary research, a number of important findings have been obtained from the data collected, which was subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. Firstly, it emerges that a business relationship is not universally defined in the same way; within the context of Turkish SMEs, a business relationship represents more than a simple trade agreement. Rather the business relationship is a means through which economic growth is generated. It further emerges that whilst within the literature trust is defined as being a core factor, amongst satisfaction and commitment as far as a successful business relationship is concerned, trust is viewed by Turkish SMEs as the foundations upon which subsequent relations can be built. As such, the business relationship is viewed as one that takes three stages, and unlike the consensus within the literature, there is no definitive end to a business relationship as far as Turkish SMEs are concerned.

The present study builds on the contributions of past academics/theorists in a bid to broaden understanding of the specific factors that influence the trading relationships between Turkish SMEs and their business partners. The implications of the research largely rest on the

significance of culture and how this shapes the business relationship. More importantly, to succeed in developing and establishing a relationship, cultural awareness, understanding and adaptation remain crucial. The study further offers evidence to suggest that expressions of trust are shaped and dictated by culture. Trust therefore has to be explored and understood within the relevant context and culture in which it will take precedence.

Chapter one

Introductory chapter

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide background information to the study, the context under investigation and the rationale for conducting the research. The chapter further provides an exhaustive and thoughtful discussion of the research aim and objectives, and the research questions. It offers a synopsis of the research methodology, in addition to a detailed outline of the five chapters that make up this thesis. The chapter also looks to provide an insight into the contribution of the research.

1.1 Background Information

Pahnke and Welter (2019) noted that, small and medium enterprises play an important role in today's globalised world, making substantial contributions to competitiveness, innovation and job creation. This mirrors the views of Maisenbacher (2018); and Shinnar & Nayır (2019), both of whom inform us that, the Turkish economy is largely dependent on Small and Medium Enterprises. These businesses play a crucial role in the growth of Turkey's GDP, owing to the large share of their contribution to enterprises (99.9%) and employment (78%) expansion in the country. Coupled with this, a recent study conducted by Kahiya (2019) reveals that Turkish SMEs display a great degree of international dynamism when exporting goods/services to foreign markets as well as when entering new markets. Cilasun *et al*. (2019) emphasised that they hold a considerable level of shares in investment, production and trade within and across countries, and therefore it can be argued that, forming business relationship with entities across borders is essential for their continual growth and expansion. Despite the growth and expansion of trade enjoyed by Turkish SMEs, Razak *et al*. (2019), warned that most SMEs in Turkey, particularly those operating within traditional sectors e.g. construction, textiles and agricultural, still lag behind their European and American counterparts. The authors argue that Turkish SMEs continue to trail behind their Western counterparts when it comes to research and development, skill levels, capital investment and direct access to modern technology. This implies that the

future growth, sustainability and success of Turkish SMEs is contingent on their ability to transform and match the technological and innovative prowess of their Western counterparts (Vellas, 2016; Sivaraksa, 2015).

A number of studies, for example, Glosenberg (2019); Hayton *et al* (2002); Mueller & Thomas (2001), indicate that national culture is one of the important supportive elements for fostering entrepreneurial growth in any country. Sezer (2019) argued that SME entrepreneurs in Turkey have largely used and benefitted from collectivistic and traditional management practices for a considerable period of time. Existing scholarship has tended to be preoccupied with larger firms operating in Turkey, as studies have sought to compare and contrast collectivist approaches to management associated with Turkish firms with their Western individualistic counterparts (Usunier, 2019; Vellas, 2016; Sezer, 2019). This has led Usunier (2019) to argue that the bulk of studies have tended to neglect the exclusive cultural values of Turkish SMEs and the ways in which these values shape and impact managerial practices as well as the business relationships they have built. Sefiani *et al.* (2018) reiterate the importance of SMEs understanding legal and civic institutions, cultural and business values pervading societies as these lie at the heart of building better business relationships. Good quality business relationships in turn strengthen and enhance cultural and business ties of the entities involved in a transaction. Here the implication is that Turkish SMEs working to build overseas business partnership/relationship should evaluate the impact of the social, cultural, and economic consequences of collaborating with foreign entities (Ali *et al.,* 2018; Adros *et al.*, 2019). Several studies, for example, Hallikainen & Laukkanen (2018); Tian et *al.,* (2018); and Shafiq *et al.,* (2019) echo the above assertions as they too, bring to light the integral role that national and organisational cultures play and the extent to which they influence business relationships.

A recent study by Nugent (2019) who conducts a multi-country survey of moral values, establishes the fluidity of Turkish society. Nugent (2019) reveals that Turkish society displays a mixture of, and not-altogether-consistent set of values, which are neither democratic nor autocratic. It further comes to light that Turkey exhibits a mixture of a trait that is neither industrialised nor technologically backward, but one that is conservative and open to change, whilst valuing achievement as much as security and relationships (Nugent, 2019). This mirrors an earlier cross-cultural study conducted by Schwartz (1994), in which Turkish people were found to be highly conservative, hierarchical, and egalitarian, but low

on affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy and mastery. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) findings also provide indication into the highly collectivist nature of Turkish culture, the high power-distance, as well as low uncertainty-avoidance and individualism. This implies that the long-term survival and sustainability of Turkish SMEs in this current aggressive global business environment requires a better understanding of not only the Turkish culture, but also that of their overseas counterparts in order to foster better business relationships (Ayden *et al,* 2018; and Hsieh *et al,* 2019).

Asenge *et al*. (2018); and Sharafizad (2018) suggest that Turkish SME owners have excellent entrepreneurial spirit and actively engage in business at an early age. Asenge *et al*. (2018) argued that despite their avowed entrepreneurial drive and commitment, most do not have the requisite educational background and/or language skills to engage in cross-border trade. Tain *et al* (2018) emphasised that business relationships cultivated by SMEs owners with foreign buyer often come as a matter of chance as these tend to be facilitated through either friends or relatives. Kostova *et al*. (2018) established that, the weak education background and limited knowledge of cross-cultural relationships force them to trust their foreign counterparts and successfully learn how to deal with overseas entities through trial and error. Hofstede (2010) stressed that Turkish exporters have low individualistic cultural experience typified by collectivism with close ties between individuals. Shirokova *et al*. (2018) concluded that, collectivist cultural characteristics of Turkish SME founders make it easier to form external relationships, which facilitates the building of close ties with foreign entities.

The continuing debate among scholars and academics relating to the mediating role culture plays in the creating and nurturing business relationships especially Turkish SMEs and their foreign counterparts, suggests that there is merit to this area of inquiry. A thorough and in-depth investigation of culture is therefore required as this will allow for a more robust understanding of the extent to which culture does impact upon business operations (Cobanoglu & Ongan, 2018; Monaghan & Tippmann 2018; and Lecluyse *et al* 2019). In the face of this lack of clarity, understanding the factors that influence cross-cultural business relationships is of paramount importance (Olavarría-Jaraba *et al,* 2018). Although previous literature has presented arguments about the impact of culture on business relationships, most of the arguments are generic and not tailored to specific contexts (Kostova *et al.,* 2018; and Lecluyse *et al.*, 2019). In addition, there is a limited body of

empirical evidence and frameworks relating to the impact of cross-cultural business relationships specifically on Turkish SMEs (Lecluyse *et al,* 2019). This is consistent with the views of Chou *et al* (2018); and Li *et al* (2018), both of whom assert that it is hard to gather data on a cross-cultural relationship marketing, and that, unlike domestic market relationships, international relationships are influenced by dissimilar cultural, social, economic and environmental factors. It is because of the previously mentioned issues that this study seeks to present empirical data to bridge the existing gap in literature and knowledge. Consequently, the primary aim of this study is to evaluate the existing gap in literature and analyse the factors influencing cross-cultural Turkish SMEs business relationship with foreign entities.

1.2 Research context and Rationale of the study

The section of the chapter will discuss the context of the study and the rationale for carrying out the research

1.2.1 Research context

The present research will be set against the backdrop of Turkey. Turkey occupies a unique geographic position, neatly nestled between Europe and Asia; a position which it has strategically used to both establish relations and conduct trade with partners across both continents over the course of a number of centuries. With a total landmass of over 783,562.38 km², Turkey shares a land border with eight of its surrounding countries. Whilst Istanbul remains the largest city in the country as well as its financial centre, Ankara is counted as the official capital. Turkey boasts a population of approximately 82 million, approximately 40% of which make up the labour force. The population of Turkey is relatively youthful with a median age of 32, whilst the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, having peaked in 2013, has remained relatively stable at $784 billion as of 2018. Turkey is currently Europe's 6th largest economy and the 17th largest economy in the world. As far as the balance of trade is concerned, these are currently valued as follows: export USD 168 billion (2018) import is USD 223 billion (2018). Europe receives the bulk of exports, with Germany leading the way at 9.6%, followed by UK (6.6%); Italy (5.7%) Spain (4.6%); France (4.3%); Netherlands (2.8%); Belgium (2.4%). As far as import sources are concerned, these include Russia (9.6%); China (6.6%); Germany (5.7%); US (5.0%); Italy (4.9%); India (4.6%); UK (4.3%); France (2.8%) (Presidency of the republic Turkey investment office official report 2018).

Figure 1.1: The map of Istanbul depicting the study area

Istanbulmap360 (2019) `District of Istanbul. Available at: https://istanbulharitasi360.com/istanbul-ilce-haritasi#map86 (Accessed at: 8 May 2019).

1.2.2 Rationale

The rationale for conducting this study centres around the fact that existing literature provides limited insight into the factors influencing Turkish SMEs cross-cultural business relationships, especially during and after the wars in Iraq and Syria. Turkey is buoyed and totally reliant on SMEs' cross-border trade to stimulate the growth and expansion of its economy, and the weak competitive positions of these SMEs compared to their European

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and North American counterparts warrants a thorough research to understand how they affect their ability to maintain and form new business relationships overseas (Niyomsilpa, 2020). In more recent studies, Razak *et al.,* (2018); and Turégano & Herrero (2018) re-affirmed this argument by stating that Turkish SMEs are valuable contributors to every aspect of the country's financial system, including their input in the regional market; their impact on unemployment; their flexibility in the field of manufacturing, and their mobilisation of untapped capital. Therefore, undertaking a study to unravel the contributions made by Turkish SMEs to the growth and expansion of the economy is vital.

In addition, the collectivistic tendency of Turkish SMEs' culture runs counter to the individualistic culture of their European and North American business partners, and therefore, understanding the cultural implications of the cross-border business relationships between Turkish entities and their business partners is germane (Dumetz and Vichniakova, 2018). It is apparent that traditional practices, values, beliefs and norms of Turkish SME entities are different from their Western counterparts and understanding how these affect their trade relationship is critical to their success (Karami and Dubinsky, 2019). Consequently, a number of Turkish SMEs are enticed by foreign markets, but are confronted with barriers relating to cross-cultural trade relationships, which they have thus far been unable to overcome (Drummond *et al.,* 2018). This is consistent with the views of Lauring and Zhang (2018), who argued that a significant number of SMEs today are working to break down geographic boundaries in a bid to ensure a smoother path to new markets with varying cultural backgrounds. They argue this variation in cultural background between countries poses a challenge for SMEs in terms of finding and/or developing partnerships and relationships with the right overseas entities. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to evaluate the cultural factors affecting Turkish SMEs' ability to establish business relationships with countries in the European Union as well as those in the Middle East and Asia, including United Kingdom, Spain, Egypt, Jordan, etc.

Relationships between different businesses have received greater attention recently in the academic world, especially the relationship between multinationals from Western countries like USA, UK, etc. as well as the European Union, and their overseas' counterparts from developing regions (Sethi *et al.,* 2018; and Kunisch *et al,* 2019). Inglehart (2018) suggested the significance of the relationship has increased due to the shift of most manufacturing activities from developed countries to developing world with the former largely dependent

on the service sector as the engine of economic growth. A considerable amount of literature has also highlighted the significance of these relationships to the well-being of the economic activity of countries/companies involved in the cross-border transaction (Håkansson *et al.*, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2011; Voldnes, 2014; Lind and Norman, 2017). However, despite the development strides made by Turkish SMEs for the past several decades, very limited empirical evidence exists relating to the significance of their cross-culture trade relationship with other overseas' entities (Sahoo & Yadav, 2018). Therefore, undertaking this study will provide not only a glaring effect of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish SMEs' partnership with other overseas' entities, but also provide a shared experience for other developing countries to use as a valuable lesson for their development.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gap in literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish manufacturing SMEs.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study will include the following:

- To analyse whether trust and adaptation are critical to Turkish SMEs fostering better business relationship with their business partners.
- To evaluate whether commitment and satisfaction influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.
- To assess whether communication/information sharing influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.
- To provide appropriate conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the influence of Trust on Turkish SMEs relationship with their business partners?

2. How does commitment affect the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

3. Why is communication/information sharing important to the sustainability of the relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

4. What is the influence of satisfaction on the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

5. How does adaptation affect the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

It is evident that, obtaining appropriate responses from respondents on the above questions will help in identifying and presenting critical evaluation of the factors that affect Turkish SMEs ability to foster better business relationship with their overseas' counterparts. Consequently, through extensive reading of the literature and on the basis of the field research conducted, the researcher identified five key factors as influencers of Turkish SMEs ability in fostering better business relationships with their overseas' partners. Shown below are the definitions of the five factors:

(i)   Trust: this is the reliance placed on the integrity, strength, and reliability of the overseas' entities (business partners) by Turkish SME entrepreneurs

(ii)   Commitment: this is the emotional connection and devotion shown by Turkish SME entrepreneur to overseas' entities (business partners)

(iii)   Communication/information sharing: this is the relaying and receiving of messages between Turkish SME entrepreneurs and their business partners to ensure the building of better relationship

(iv)   Satisfaction: this is the feeling of fulfilment experienced by Turkish SME entrepreneurs following successfully building a relationship and transacting a business

(v) Adaptation: this is the ability and willing of Turkish SME entrepreneurs to modify their behaviour when confronted with entrepreneurs from a culture that differs to their own

A number of scholars have also highlighted, trust, satisfaction, commitment, communication/information sharing and adaptation as critical to enhancing the relationship between domestic entities and their overseas partners (Cha & Kim, 2018; Mittal *et al*, 2018; and Yuan *et al.*, 2018). In an earlier study, Ajmal *et al.* (2017) argued that trust, satisfaction, commitment, communication/information sharing, and adaptation promotes alliances between SMEs of different national origins as globalisation is placing increasing pressure on them to embrace interdependent relationships. A recent study by Block *et al.* (2019); and Brieger & De Clercq (2019) emphasised that these cross-cultural factors are the determinants of relationship building and creation even in the face of the high rate of failures. Predicated on the fact that Turkish SMEs want to maximise their chances of success in the international market, relationship building emerged as being vital (Hosseini, 2019; and Pohludka & Štverková, 2019). In addition, extant research indicates some business relationships behavioural occurrences vary across culture in significant ways (Block *et al.*, 2019; and Fukukawa *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, investigating how cross-cultural relationships are built between Turkish SMEs and other overseas' entities will increase our appreciation and understanding of the challenges faced by these companies. Furthermore, it would also serve to highlight how they work to overcome these cultural barriers in their daily business dealings (Singh *et al.*, 2019).

As noted in the opening section of the chapter, SMEs are the backbone of the Turkish economy as they contribute significantly to the exporting of products across the globe (Ananto *et al.*, 2019; and Mzwri & Altinkaya, 2019). A study conducted by Charmes (2019) testifies to this as it is brought to light that Turkish SMEs contribute to about 93.5% of the total share of the industry exports; and 4% of agricultural and fishery exports. The study area, Istanbul, is the citadel of industrial activities contributing to 53.56% of exports, followed closely by Bursa with 6.01% and Izmir with 5.77% (Charmes, 2019). Turkish SMEs are engaged in trade with many countries across the word, and they have been able to initiate and expand their influence in former Ottoman territories, such as the Middle East and North Africa (Barkey, 2019). In addition, the current government's drive to stimulate the economy by churning out favourable SME policies are also contributing to their global attraction and

development, including creating opportunity for faster and easier money transfers, and limited trade regulations (Mamman, 2019).

A study conducted by Bruns *et al*. (2019) supports this notion of expansion by stating that, Turkish SMEs have increased their exports to MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries to cover any existing gap in trade and broadened their experience by entering new markets like the European Union by producing products that comply with EU standards. The drive of Turkish SMEs to ensure their products meet EU quality standards have triggered the opportunity for re-branding and acceptance of their products in new markets such as Africa (O'Dwyer & Gilmore, 2019). Consequently, SMEs in Istanbul were used as samples in investigating the cross-cultural factors that influence their business relationship with overseas' entities. This is because they are the principal drivers of the Turkish economy and by extension the most dominant engagers in SMEs activities across Turkey (Georgakopoulos, 2017). This research, therefore, focuses on Istanbul based SMEs and their respective business relationships with trading partners across MENA countries, the European Union and Asia. The definition of SMEs in the context of the present study includes any entity that employs more than 50 employees and engages in cross-border trade with businesses across the world.

1.5 Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that uses an inductive approach in analysing the data obtained from the field. The researcher opted for a qualitative based study as this allows for the development of an in-depth understanding and insight into the experiences of Turkish SMEs cross-cultural business relationships with other overseas' entities. In addition, the use of such an approach provides an opportunity to obtain information on how Turkish SMEs construct meaning to events unfolding in their environment. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were considered as being the most appropriate instrument for gathering in-depth insight and understanding into the experiences of Turkish SMEs in their natural settings. Doing so helped to uncover the crucial cross-cultural factors that influenced their business relationship with overseas' entities. A small sample size was employed using cross-sectional study to gain insight into the cross-cultural behaviours of Turkish SMEs due of time constraints. The study pursued reliability, validity and generalisability by triangulating the data obtained from multiple sources, including the use of audit trails to authenticate the data collected. Therefore, the following stages formed the data collection process:

Stage 1: To gain an insight into the existing gap in literature, the researcher reviewed various secondary sources to understand the factors influencing cross-cultural trade relationships. This prompted the formulation of a semi-structured interview and the identification of themes based on the literature sources.

Stage 2: To gain an insight into Turkish SMEs' cross-cultural business relationships behaviour, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 25 entities in Istanbul engaged in various manufacturing activities were conducted. They narrated their experiences of the influence of culture on their business relationship with overseas' entities in their natural setting.

Stage 3: To triangulate the data obtained in stage 2, the research used observation techniques to evaluate whether the actions, behaviours and attitudes of Turkish SME entrepreneurs conforms to the responses provided in the face to face semi-structured interviews.

1.6 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis contributes to knowledge for multiple audiences, including refining and re-directing the Turkish government's SME policies; and enhancing the academic understanding of current factors influencing SMEs within a Turkish context

1.6.1 Directs and Enhances Turkish government's policies towards SMEs

A key contribution of this study is that it helps enhance and re-direct the Turkish government's policies on SMEs development and highlight how cultural trade barriers experienced by businesses can be reformed to establish formidable relationship with other overseas' entities. In addition, it will help streamline the Turkish government's understanding and knowledge on how to deal with nations whose culture might vary from their own one. A number of studies, for example, Evert *et al* (2016); Pakdil & Leonard (2017); and Oyedele & Firat (2018), have argued that SMEs routinely experience difficulties when it comes to their cross-border trade relationships. Chief amongst which tends to be their inability to understand the cultural nuance of other nations. This is in turn compounded by the fact that SMEs are seldom well-versed when it comes to the use of appropriate approaches to enhance their trading relationships. Therefore, this study would educate not only Turkish SME policy-makers, but also their business partners further afield, especially developing countries' governments whose SMEs are not only in their embryonic stage, but extremely fledgling and therefore, struggling to foster a better trading relationship with other nations across the world.

1.6.2 Academic contribution

This research contributes to our knowledge and understanding of the factors influencing the cross-cultural trade relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners in a new way, including the roles of BRD processes, the channels and stages of communication, and the satisfaction gained from the trading relationship. Previous research in this area has tended to focus on the business relationship of multinationals and large businesses (Cantwell & Piscitello, 2015; and Li & Oh, 2016). It is evident there has been little research undertaken into how cross-cultural factors influence Turkish SMEs' relationships with other overseas' entities (Li & Oh, 2016). In a recent study, Gorodnichenko & Roland (2017) have shown that cross-cultural trade plays a significant role in the growth and expansion of developing economies around the world. However, Karam & Jamali (2017) argued that, undertaking further research is vital to move beyond theorising the cross-cultural relationship between entities. Therefore, this study will present new empirical evidence that will build on the contributions of past academics/theorists and broaden our understanding of the specific factors that influence the trading relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is categorised into five chapters, which reflects the structure and content of the study. Figure 1.2 presents a systematic discussion of the flow of each of the chapter.

Figure 1.2: An outline of the research process
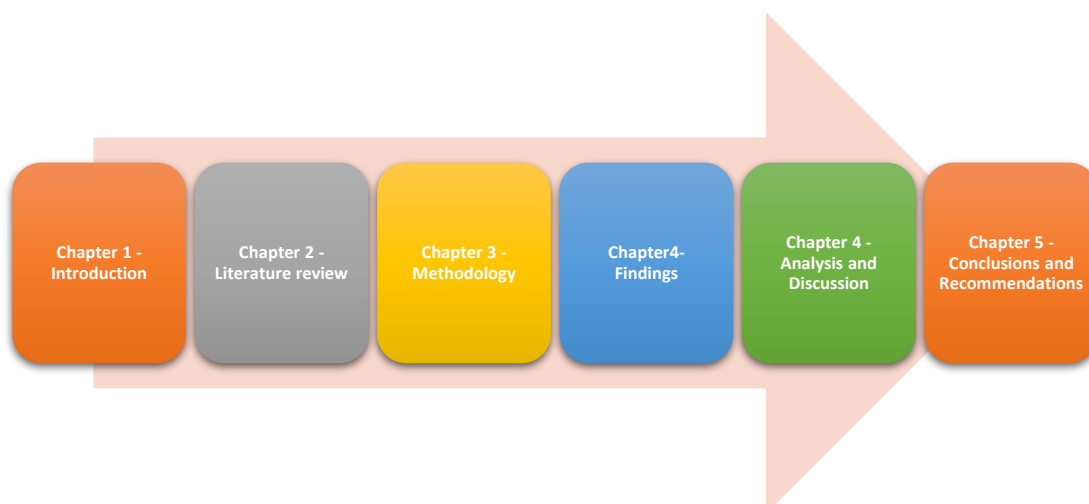
Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter provides a comprehensive background of Turkish SMEs, whilst providing the rationale, an aim and objectives of the study. The chapter further highlights the research method used, provides a clear outline of the thesis' structure and its contributions to knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a detailed review of the concept and definition of culture; factors influencing cross-cultural business relationship, including trust, commitment, satisfaction, communication/information sharing and adaptation. It critically reviews their effects on cross-cultural business relationships and evaluates the dimensions of culture proposed by Hofstede (1980, 2001), and other theorists, for example, the GLOBE study (2010), and Schwartz (2001). It reviewed the context of Hofstede's five dimensions with those of other theorists by comparing and contrasting their contents before summarising key findings and ideas from the existing body of research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses and justifies the research philosophy; the research methods and the methods of data analysis; and presents a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the empirical investigation and provides an in-depth analysis of the key themes that emerged from the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 25 participants from the Turkish SME sector.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter discusses the results and analyses the findings of the data obtained from the field research using semi-structured interviews. It provides a detailed discussion of the key findings whilst synthesising these with those offered by past theorists as covered within the literature review, in order to form a comparative evaluation between the two.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides an insight and justification into the processes and procedures involved in the data collection and presents appropriate linkage between the research outcomes and the aim and objectives of the study, including the research questions. It also discusses the basis of the conclusions and their implications for both theory and practice and provides appropriate recommendations for future research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter discusses the background, the context and the rationale for conducting the research. It further provided an exhaustive and thoughtful discussion of the research aim and objectives, and the research questions. Synopsis of the research methodology is provided, including a detailed outline of the study. An insight into the contribution of the research is also offered. provided.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The chapter aims to review the factors influencing cross-cultural business relationships, including trust, commitment, satisfaction, communication/information sharing and adaptation. It critically reviews the effects of each of these factors on the cross-cultural business relationships between Turkish entities and their foreign business partners. It also aims to review and evaluate the dimensions of culture proposed by Hofstede (1980, 2001), and other theorists, for example, the GLOBE study (2010), and Schwartz (2001). It reviewed the context of Hofstede's five dimensions with those of other theorists by comparing and contrasting their contents. In addition, the chapter consists of two sections: one discusses the concepts of culture, whilst the other focuses on cross-cultural business relationship.

Section A – Culture

This section of the literature will review the perspectives of theorists on culture and highlight the cultural factors that affect the operations of SMEs. A number of theorists, for example, Oparaocha (2015) and Martínez-Román et al. (2015) have argued that culture significantly affects cross-border trade of SMEs. Consequently, this section will provide an in-depth insight into their claims.

2.1 Definition of culture

Definitions of culture continue to remain elusive, dividing academics and practitioners alike. Attempts at establishing a unified definition continue to go in vain as perspectives and definitions change depending on the lens applied (Athanasopoulou and Selsky, 2015; and Hatch, 2018). This in turn creates an ongoing challenge for novice researchers who turn to the existing body of knowledge in their search for an established definition which can be used as a starting-point for new scholarly (Pope et al., 2019). For example, Johnson et al (2017) defined culture as a collective set of established and accepted beliefs and values shared by a particular group, community or organisation. In comparison, Collinson et al (2017, p. 165) defined culture as "the sum total of the beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artefacts that characterise human populations". Evaluating the perspectives of the two theorists, Johnson et al (2017) and Collinson (2017), it is evident that, despite the emphasis placed on values and

beliefs by both authors, the latter author's reference to rules and institutions stands at odd with the views of Johnson et al (2017). A further critical review of past definitions of culture suggests both Johnsons et al., and Collinson's perspective of culture mirrors Tyler's (1870) definition whereby the knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and other capabilities acquired by man as a part of society. In this respect, the view of earlier theorists, can also be borrowed, mainly Kluckholn and Strodbeck (1952) and their values orientation theory. The theory in question upholds that any definition of culture must answer a limited number of universal problems, emphasising that the value-based solutions are limited in number and universally known, and preferences of culture differ from place to place. Other notable contributors to the definition of culture worth mentioning are those of Rokeach's (1973) "nature of human values; Schwartz's (2001) "theory of basic human values; and Weber's (1905) "system of ideas that constitute a design for living". In the face of this plethora of definitions, it is worth complementing Hofstede's (2001) view of culture as the "collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes one human group from another".

The author of this research subscribes to the definitions of Hofstede (2001); Kluckholn and Strodbeck (1952); Rokeach (1973); Schwartz (2001); and Webber (1905) in which culture constitutes a system of values, beliefs and norms shared by people of similar ethnic/culture background and which when taken together constitute a design for living. As a result, it is evident from the above theorists that culture can be viewed using the following lenses:

2.1.1. National culture

Caprar and Neville (2012) argued that, every nation has distinguished characteristics, which grants it a unique position in the world; when extended to economic activities, culture continues to offer as set of parameters which go on to shape and influence how business behave and conduct themselves. This argument has been alluded to by a number of studies, for example, Moore (2016); and Crotts and Mazanec (2018) believe culture plays a fundamental part in the ways in which relationships are formed, this includes both interpersonal as well as business relationships. Van de Ven and Mulrooney (2017) established that, individuals involved in business transactions across cultures need to forge strong social and structural bonds, which is a useful platform for cultural and individual adaptation. This indicates that Turkish SMEs conducting businesses across cultures need to understand the cultural distinction that exists in different markets and modify/adapt their behaviour to forge a good business relationship with counterparts (Lee, 2018).

Reason (2016) suggests that in addition to shaping behaviour and relationships, national culture also informs the ways in which individuals within a nation think. Culture thus sets the overarching 'thinking' framework for those who subscribe to it; individuals who belong to a particular culture are also likely to behave and respond in a similar manner in any given situation. Gilbert (2018) emphasised that, the national culture of any state goes on to determines their identity; this identity is then like to be unique and dissimilar from any other nation or state. This argument reflects findings put forward in an earlier study conducted by Hofstede et al. (2010), where national culture was said to define a nation's identity. In addition, Hofstede et al., (2010) emphasise that understanding such identity helps cast light on cultural closeness of nations, be it geographic or social closeness, or closeness facilitated by religion or language. A degree of consensus emerges when the arguments of Hajro (2015); De Mooij (2018) and Hofstede et al (2010) are consulted. Far from being dissimilar, they view national culture as the basis for fostering a good business relationship with entities outside one's country's border.

2.1.2. Cultural Closeness and Affinity

Reviewing scholarly work from this decade, for example, Gerson and Rubin (2015); Tonkin et al (2016); and Storey (2018), suggests the definition of cultural closeness is elusive, thus a universal definition of the term is yet to emerge. Sorokin (2017) argues that nations are able to demonstrate cultural closeness in their relationship when they depict similarity in culture, technology and location, which provides a platform for commonalities and the build-up of mutual expectations. In comparison, an earlier study by Fuchs (2015) emphasised similarity between national cultures can be instrumental in identifying cultural closeness and/or cultural affinity, and argued, sometimes it can be used to depict a nation's communication styles or the behaviour of individuals within it. The concept of cultural closeness and affinity has been topical for several decades, which has enabled it to attract the attention of many prominent theorists, for example, Hofstede, (1980); Gatignon and Anderson (1988); Wiengarten et al. (2011); and Vanden Abeele (2016). To epitomise the arguments of various theorists, Murdock (1945) outlines 72 common denominators to determine similarities between nations, indicating they provide useful parameters for identifying similarities between nations:

"Age-grading, athletic, sports, bodily adornment, calendar, cleanliness, training, community organization, cooking, cooperative labour, cosmology, courtship, dancing, decorative art, divination, division of labour, dream interpretation, education, eschatology, ethics,

ethnobotany, etiquette, faith healing, family, feasting, fire making, folklore, food taboos, funeral rites, games, gestures, gift giving, government, greetings, hair styles, hospitality housing, hygiene, incest taboos, inheritance rules, joking, Kingroups, kinship nomenclature, language, law, luck superstitions, magic, marriage, mealtimes, medicine, modesty concerning natural functions, mourning, music, mythology, numerals, obstetrics, penal sanctions, personal names, population policy, postnatal care, pregnancy usages, property rights, propitiation of supernatural beings, puberty customs, religious ritual, residence rules, sexual restrictions, soul concepts, status differentiation, surgery, tools making, trade, visiting, weaning, and weather control."

For West and Ibrahim (2015) the primary advantage of understanding cultural affinity is an economic one. Doing so, provides opportunity to introduce one's own country's products/services into the international market. This is echoed by Crane and Matten (2016) who believe that a country that obtains cultural connections with others, has the potential to improve their business dealings, thus making it easier for them to penetrate into new markets. Despite the opportunity and relationship, it helps foster between nations, Zahra and Wright (2016) warned this comes with its own perils. They argue, sometimes broadening such business relationships and entering into new markets may bring about unwanted competition and rivalry between nations. In addition, De Mooij (2018) argued that every nation has a unique culture which influences its lifestyle, thinking and behaviour. This may in turn conflict with the interests of other nations and hinder the way they relate with each other. This suggests that, the idea of cultural closeness and affinity is nothing short of a mirage, as nations/businesses can only foster good relationships when it suits their interests as well as any benefits they derive from the relationship (Rodríguez Porto, 2016).

2.2 Evaluating Hofstede's model of cultural dimension

A number of theorists, for example, Bond (1987); Hofstede (2001); Schwartz (2001); and House et al (2010), offer frameworks that are appropriate for analysing, operationalising and conceptualising culture, but none is more widely used and acclaimed than Hofstede's framework (Schiele, 2015). In his study, Hofstede distributed 116,000 questionnaires amongst more than 60,000 respondents in 70 countries (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, and 2001). To discern the cultural distinctions between nation states, he identified 5 dimensions, and assigned indexes to each nation state, and then showed the linkage between the dimensions using demographic, geographic, economic, and political differences between them (Beugelsdijk et al, 2015), A

number of theorists, (Gracia et al. 2015; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee 2018) maintain that Hofstede's work and subsequent framework remains the most inclusive and vigorous when it comes to analysing national cultures. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) reiterate that the framework continues to be invaluable to cross-cultural studies. A review of the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) reveals the framework has been quoted by 1036 people, dating from his earlier study of culture's consequences in 1980 to journals published in 1993 (Dimitrov, 2018). Consequently, Hofstede's (1980, 1991, and 2001) framework is the most operationalised and continues to be widely applied in contemporary marketing studies (Schiele, 2015).

Despite the overwhelming support of Hofstede's framework, it is prudent to note that it is in no way considered infallible., The framework is said to have several shortcomings, including the inadequacy of the empirical study he conducted for his earlier four dimensions (McSweeney et al., 2016). A number of theorists, Baker (2015) and Hauff and Richter (2015), have argued that the framework is obsolete and that, it does not take into consideration the recent changes across national cultures. However, other theorists, for example, Bains (2015) and Van de Vijver (2015), have suggested the changes are ponderous and slow, and that changes in culture across nations is persistent. For example, Shiraev and Levy (2016) pointed to the cultural longevity of the Roman Empire, where some of the cultural norms and values of the past are prevalent in current day Italy. A number of theorists have also disapproved of the procedure used in identifying the dimension as experimental instead of theory driven (Kluch and Vaux, 2017; and Kornilaki and Font, 2019)). In addition, some opponents argue the study is non-exhaustive and largely based on chance, and that, it constitutes a subjective and arbitrary aggregation of items (Bouzguenda and Abdelkafi 2015; and Schwarz, 2019), emphasising that, it was conducted in one organisation and therefore, not applicable to other organisations (Hatch. 2018). Other theorists questioned the applicability of the dimensions to other cultures that were not part of the framework, emphasising that, other type of samples might have "yielded different dimensions and order of nations" (Schwartz, 2001; and Ngai et al., 2015). Additional criticisms of Hofstede's dimensions centre on the fact that it ignores sub-cultures and ethnicities common in Africa, Asia and Middle East, and superficially based is arguments on predominant national cultures (Kakay, 2017). As such, Hofstede's dimensions failed to highlight the influence of political changes and the impact of dictatorship on the cultures of certain societies (Minasyan, 2016). In fact, he failed to capture the advent and impact of disruptive technology such as social media and the Internet on national cultures (Faqih and Jaradat, 2015). Nevertheless, one can establish that despite the shortfalls of the dimensions, it

will be unconscionable to ignore its validity and contributions to social science study (Kakay, 2017).

An analysis of Hofstede et al. (2010) dimensions will include the following: Power Distance (PDI); Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV); Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS); Uncertainty Avoidance (UAD); and Long-term versus Short-term orientation (LSO), and therefore, this section of the chapter will discuss each dimension and highlight its implications across cultures.

2.2.1 Power Distance

Hofstede el al. (2010) define power distance as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country accept and expect the unequal distribution of power. The authors emphasised that this dimension reflects the disadvantages of unequal distribution of power and authority in society. It is further argued that it shows how hierarchical and dependence relationships are distributed in family and organizational contexts in societies. For example, high power distance nations tend to readily accept and obey orders from those that they perceive as holding more power; respect is thus expressed in a distinct way in these societies (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, this argument cannot be generalised for all societies; one only has to look as far as a country such as Venezuela which when examined through Hofstede's lens, is characterised by a symbolic, high power distance. Despite this however, Venezuela continues to be marred by violence, protests and demonstrations from subordinates across the country (Kingsbury, 2018). This implies that the dimension may be true for certain societies but does not present a holistic picture for all societies and is thus noa universally applicable framework (Triandis, 2018).

Contrarily, Hofstede et al. (2003) suggested that in low power distance societies, there is almost equal distribution of power among managers and employees in the workplace they further argue that in such societies, power is decentralised in the workplace therefore it is not uncommon for interactions involving management and subordinates to be friendly. This goes beyond pleasantries and includes consultation and idea sharing between hierarchical levels. Within such contexts, relationships between staff is pragmatic and open (Hofstede, 1980). Questionably, whilst Hofstede's view may reflect cultural behavioural practices of low power distance countries, though it is not possible to draw generalisations (Wiengarten et al., 2015). Wiengarten (2015) specifically cites the United Kingdom (UK) when attempting to substantiate his own assertion; he argues that Hofstede's classification of the UK is general at

best and nor reflective of the strata within society. More specifically, the distribution and acceptance of power differs from sector to sector and Wiengarten maintains that this is so central to the make-up of society in the UK, that it must not go unacknowledged. For example, sectors such as civil service remains highly structured and deeply rooted in hierarchy which continues to be accepted within the sector.

2.2.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

For Hofstede et al. (2010), individualism relates to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose, more specifically, the expectations within such societies are such that every individual looks after himself/herself and/or his/her immediate family. On the other hand, collectivism is defined as the polar opposite of individualism, where individuals from birth and thereafter, are placed into robust and cohesive groups, and who during their lifetime, bear the responsible to protect in exchange for absolute loyalty (Hofstede et al, 2010). This implies that, in individualistic society, the individual lives his life as he pleases and pursue the values he accepts, and therefore, in such societies, the individual lives and thinks of his/her own interest over the group (Triandis, 2018).

Triandis (2018) elaborates insomuch that personal rights and independence are viewed as being more important within individualist societies. As a result of this, individuals tend to start their lives early. On the contrary, collectivist societies value group rights and interdependence, and therefore, tend to start life very late or sometimes are entangled in the group for life. On this basis, Hofstede et al. (2010) classified countries such as the United States, Canada and Britain as individualistic in nature. Whilst others such as Japan, Turkey, China, South Korea and African countries as collectivist due to their preference to work in groups, whilst group interest and goals are prioritised above those of the individual. The collectivist or individualist orientations of these countries is said to have a major impact upon the success of companies; Hofstede et al. (2010) thus argue that in collectivist societies, business success was contingent on team work. The implication here is that societies can only forge success based on their cultural orientation and beliefs (Triandis, 2018). However, such a generalisation is too parochial and simplistic, as nations over the years have evolved after Hofstede's study and will continue to do so in the future (Beugelsdijk, 2015).

2.2.3 Masculinity versus Femininity

Hofstede (1980) argues that the overriding values in masculine societies are achievement and success, whilst in feminine societies, caring for others and improving the quality of life dominates. He upholds the role of gender being prevalent in most societies, reiterating that, a society's culture determines which gender groups predominates. Societal success is thus said to be largely dependent on the drive, determination and toughness of individuals within it (Rouxel, 2015). However, such a generalisation is weak and not necessarily supported by empirical evidence; one only has to look as far as 'feminine' societies such as Japanand Korea, which are largely successful, irrespective of their cultural orientation (Brienza, 2015).

2.2.4 Uncertainty Avoidance (UAD)

Hofstede (1991, p. 113) defined uncertainty avoidance, as "the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations". He argued that this dimension deals with the need for well-defined guidelines for agreed behaviour. However, David (2015) suggests the extent to which a society handles the fact that the future is constantly unknown is very important: should one attempt to control the future or merely allow it to happen? Hofstede (1991) reiterated that countries which show a high level of uncertainty avoidance, uphold rigid codes of behaviour and belief, and therefore, embrace bias towards unusual behaviours and ideas; whilst, those with low level of uncertainty avoidance, tend to uphold a more relaxed approach and therefore, place emphasis on practice rather than principles (Hofstede et al., 2010).

2.2.5 Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO)

Hofstede (2001, p. 359) defined long-term orientation as "the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift". This was a late addition to Hofstede's (1980) initial four dimensions of culture (Bond, 1987), which represents a range of Confucian-like values and was characterised as the Confucian Dynamism. Hofstede (1991) later suggested the long-term versus short-term orientation as more appropriate based on the cultural thriftiness/perseverance differences between societies.

2.3 Analysis of the Frameworks/Models of other cultural theorists

Figure 2.1: A diagrammatic representation of Schwartz Model/Framework
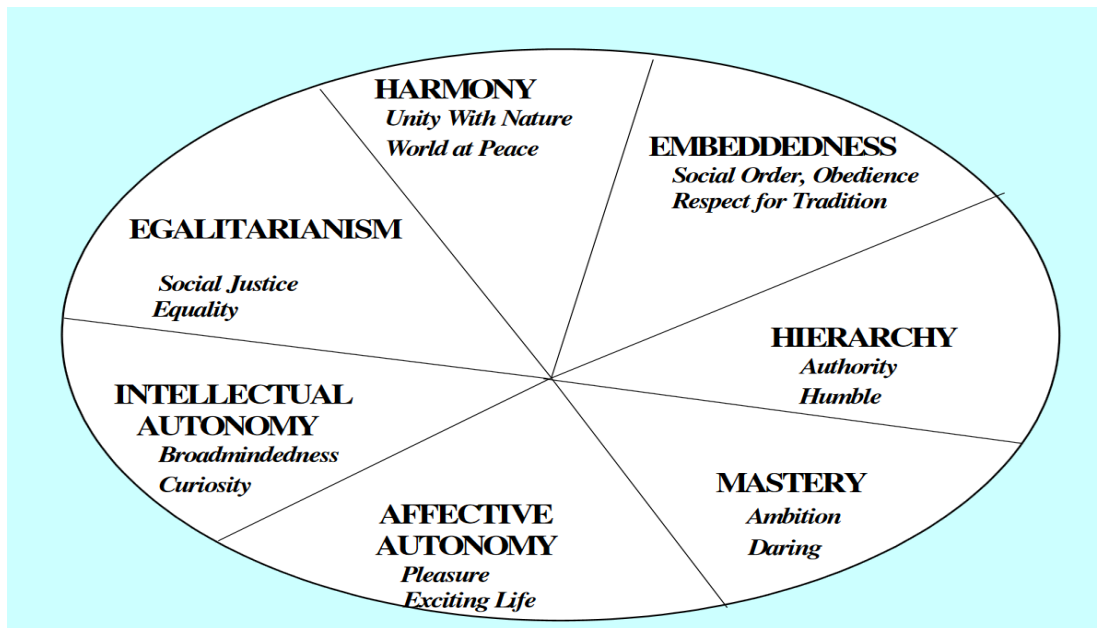
Source: Schwartz (2001, p. 65)

Schwartz (2001) suggested that cultural value orientations find expression in the norms, practices, and institutions of a society, which help shape the contingencies to which people must adapt in their daily lives. He emphasised that these value orientations help to determine the individual behaviours, attitudes, and preferences, which are legitimate in common social contexts. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) established that, societies confront certain basic issues in regulating human behaviour, and that cultural values are never static, but evolve and changes, as societies identify how to address the problems they are confronted with. Schwartz (2001) classified societal problems into seven categories:

2.3.1 Autonomous versus embeddedness: Schwartz (2001) suggests that cultures which are characterised by a high degree of autonomy house individuals who display high levels of independence. People in such cultures are encouraged to nurture and direct their own preferences, feelings, ideas, and abilities, and therefore, tend to define their own distinctiveness. On other hand, Schwartz (2009) argued that cultures that place emphasis on conformity were more inclined to be collectivistic. He established that in such cultures, people tend to value social relationships by identifying with the group, and partaking in a communal approach to life, and working toward common goals.

2.3.2 Hierarchy versus egalitarianism: Schwartz (2001) suggested that cultural hierarchy is dependent on hierarchical systems where roles are defined to guarantee responsible and productive behaviour. He argued that in such societies, the unequal distribution of power/resources/roles are appropriate and acceptable. As such, people are socialised from birth to comply with this hierarchical role distribution, and in the same vein are expected to abide by the rules and obligations to the roles. Cultural egalitarianism, on the other hand, seeks people's recognition of one another as moral equals and share basic benefits as human beings (Schwartz, 2001). He emphasised that, in such cultures, people are socialised to internalise commitment to cooperation with others as well as share their concerns.

2.3.3 Harmony versus mastery: Schwartz (2001) suggested that, cultures that embrace harmony tend emphasize fitting into the social and natural world by appreciating and accepting events around them, and makes limited attempt in try to change, direct, or exploit them. In such societies, Schwartz (2001) proclaimed place value on peace, unity with nature, and protecting the environment. On the other hand, Schwartz (2001) claims that societies which appreciate Mastery cultures tend to encourage active self-assertion to direct, change and personalise nature and the social environment. He argued that, in such societies, people tend to value ambition, success, daring, self-sufficiency, and competence.

In summary, it is evident that, the model/framework tried to specify three polarising dimensions of culture, as a resolution to the problems confronting human societies: embeddedness versus autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony (Banerjee and Wahl, 2017). This implies that, a societal emphasis on the cultural orientation at one pole of the dimension follows a de-emphasis at the other (Banerjee and Wahl, 2017). Schwartz's typology has been less widely used either due to the large number of his publications scattered across with each focusing on a single segment of the total number of cultures explored (Stahl and Tung, 2015). On the other hand, one can argue that, it may be due wide acceptability of Hofstede's (1980) earlier study (Baptista and Oliveira, 2015). Nonetheless, Schwartz's typology provides a useful theoretical foundation to some researchers (Mahler, 2017).

2.4 Analysis of the Globe cultural framework

The most recent contribution to organisation and management science is the study conducted by Globe (House et al., 2010), which appears to offer researchers an alternative to Hofstede'

framework. Over 160 researchers involving 17,000 respondents in 62 countries conducted the GLOBE Project (House et al., 2010). The study selected middle level managers from three industries, including financial services, food processing, and telecommunications. In the study, GLOBE highlighted nine cultural dimensions as fundamental to distinguishing cultural differences between societies, mainly assertiveness - the degree to which individuals in societies are assertive, confrontational, aggressive, and straightforward; uncertainty avoidance - the extent to which members of a society strive to avoid uncertainty, by relying on established social norms and practices; power distance - the degree to which members of a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally; collectivism I(institutional collectivism) - the degree to which societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action, as opposed to individual distribution and individual action; collectivism II (in-group collectivism) - the extent to which members of a society express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their groups, organizations, or families; gender egalitarianism - the degree to which a society minimizes gender role differences; future orientation - the degree to which members of a society engage in future-oriented behaviours, such as planning, investing, and delaying gratification; and performance orientation - the degree to which a society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence; and humane orientation - the extent to which a society encourages and rewards its members for being fair, altruistic, friendly, caring, and kind to others (House et al, 2010).

Analytically, it is evident that, the first six dimensions of the GLOBE study share commonalities with Hofstede's (1980, 2001) work. However, despite the similarity shared between the two studies, correlation analyses show that, they are markedly different (Arpaci, 2015). Unlike Hofstede's dimensions, the GLOBE study provides data on a societal level and is not constrained to the workplace. In addition, the study in question explicitly differentiates between societal values and actual practices (Stephan et al, 2015). The distinction between values and practices was assimilated to match with Schein's (2004) perceptions of artefacts versus exposed values, as two distinct levels of culture (House et al., 2010). House et al. (2010) argued that, artefacts are the visible products, processes, and behaviours of a culture, emphasising that, they primarily reflect the "as is" and, as such, the cultural practices.

On the other hand, House et al (2010) reiterated that, espoused values are the individuals' or society's sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is, emphasising that, they primarily

reflect the "should be" and, as such, the cultural values. Unlike Hofstede's (1980, 2001) studies, the GLOBE study recognizes that, on occasion, both levels of culture may even be in conflict with each other. It is useful to emphasise that, despite the fact that, the GLOBE study provides data on a societal instead of the individual level of culture, individuals are socialized through the values that are held and the behaviours that are practiced in their cultures (Mueller et al., 2015). Consequently, one can argue that, they are likely to adopt practices shared by members of the same society (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In addition, the GLOBE study contests two a priori assumption of the most recent cross-cultural advertising research influenced by Hofstede's (1980) study (Popli et al., 2016). Firstly, it assumes that measuring individual-level values is a robust way of measuring cultures, (Popli et al., 2016). This has been termed the ecological values assumption, meaning that being privy of the values of members of one culture is enough to make the claim that a single culture is understood and known (Jenkins et al., 2018).

Secondly, the theory assumes that the relationship between values and specific perceptions of an advert is generalisable to depict the linkage between values and general perceptions of advertising in the culture (Jenkins et al., 2018). House et al (2010) indicated that, there is evidence to suggest that, values are related to such practices as voting behaviour or managerial behaviour, and so when people in a society report that they value future orientation, then these people must also be practicing future orientation in their day-to-day activities. This implies that, knowing the values in a culture reflects what actually occurs in that culture (De Mooij, 2018).

2.5 Low and high context culture

Hall (1976) suggested a set of parameters to help situate cultures along two dimensions, including Low and High context of communication. He observed that, the features of HC and LC Communication of ''meaning and context are intricately linked to each other'' and suggested that to understand communication one should look at meaning and context together with the code (Hall, 1976). This implies that, one need to take a critical look at the situation, background, or environment connected to an event, or an individual before making a judgement (Chang & Chen, 2015). HC communication focuses on the physical aspects as well as the time and situation in which the communication occurs (Hall 1976). Hall (1976) further reiterates that a closer relationship influences the tendency of HC communication, as it promotes the desire of the two individuals to share their knowledge with one another. HC

communication however does not always have to be verbal or direct; it can instead take many forms and can be indirect, ambiguous, reserved and understated (Usunier, 2019) Consequently, LC communication can also be direct, as well as precise, dramatic, open, and based on feelings or true intentions.

Hall (1976, p. 79) proclaimed that, HC communication usually involves the use of ''information in the physical context and/or internalized by a person'' and that, greater confidence is placed on the nonverbal than the verbal aspects of communication. This implies that, face-to-face communication in HC cultures is extensively nonverbal in conveying meanings, and usually take the shape of behavioural language, for example, gestures, body language, silence, proximity and symbolic behaviour (Byrne & Cochet, 2017). Therefore, one can conclude that people from HC communication cultures set the context where interactions are exchanged without a problem being addressed directly referring to the problem directly (Hall, 1976). On the contrary, LC communication cultures are externalised and entrusted in explicit code. This implies that, LC communication cultures are less physically animated, and the meaning depends on the content and the spoken word (Hall et al., 2017). Thus, it is imperative that, those who use LC communication style are expected to communicate directly and are consistent with their feelings (Hall et al., 2017).

Conflict is therefore dealt with in distinct ways in both contexts, for example HC cultures tend to use indirect, non-confrontational, and vague language, relying on the listener or reader's ability to grasp the meaning from the context. Alternatively, those from LC cultures tend to use a more direct, confrontational, and explicit style to ensure that, the listener receives the message accurately. Vogel et al, (2015) conducted a study on North American and Korean supervisors in which it emerged, a dissatisfied North American supervisor dealing with a subordinate's sales proposal would probably be explicit and direct; whilst a dissatisfied Korean supervisor in the same situation would use a modest and an indirect approach.

2.6 Comparative analysis of Hofstede's dimension with the frameworks/models of other theorists

Table 2.1: Comparison between Hofstede's model/framework with the models/frameworks of other theorists

	Masculinity/ Feminity	Individualism/ collectivism	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Long-term orientation	Other
Hofstede (1984) Hofstede (1991, 2001) Inkeles and Levinson (1969)* Triandis (1995)	Conceptions of self		Relation to authority	Primary dilemmas or conflicts		
Chinese Cultural Connection (1987)	Human heartedness	Integration			Confucian work dynamism	Moral discipline
Clark (1990)*	Relations to self		Relation to authority	Relation to risk		
Trompenaars (1997)	Neutral/emotional	Universalism/particularism Individualism/ communitarianism			Attitudes to time	Specific /diffuse Achievement/ascription Attitudes to the environment Paternalism
Dorfman and Howell (1988) Schwartz (1994) Smith et al. (1996) Keillor and Hult (1999)	Mastery/harmony	Autonomy/conservantism Loyal involvement/ utilitarian involvement	Hierarchy/ egalitarianism Conservantism/ egalitarianism			Discussion of a third dimension 3 deferred National heritage/culture homogeneity/belief system/ consumer ethnocentrism
Steenkamp (2001)*		Autonomy/collectivism	Egalitarianism/hierarchy	Uncertainty avoidance	Mastery/ nurturance-	

Source: Soares et al (2007, p. 280)

From the Table 2.1, Hofstede's (1984, 1991, and 2001) dimension of individualism/collectivism share commonality with Triandis' (1995) cultural discourse of integration; Trompenaars' (1997) universalism/particularism/individualism/communitarianism; Dorfman and Howell's (1988), and Schwartz's (1994) dimension of autonomy/conservatism; Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult's (1999) dimension of loyal involvement/utilitarian involvement and Steenkamp (2001) autonomy/collectivism. However, Inkeles and Levinson (1969); and Clark (1990) failed to highlight this divide (collectivism/individualism) between national cultures in their study. On the other hand, Hofstede's (1984, 1991, and 2001) dimension of masculinity/femininity shared similarity with Inkeles and Levinson's (1969) dimension of conceptions of self; and Triandis' (1995) dimension of human heartedness.

In addition, his dimension shared commonality with Clark's (1990) dimension of relations to self; Trompennars' (1997) dimension of neutral/emotional; and Dorfman and Howell (1988), Schwartz (1994), Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult's (1999) dimension of

mastery/harmony. However, Steenkamp's (2001) framework failed to capture the impact of masculinity/femininity on societal cultures. Comparing Hofstede's (1984, 1991, and 2001) dimension of power distance, it is evident from the Table 2.1 that it shares commonality with Inkeles and Levinson (1969) and Clark's (1990) dimension of relation to authority; and Dorfman and Howell (1988), and Schwartz's (1994) dimension of Hierarchy/egalitarianism.

Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult's (1999) dimension of conservatism/egalitarianism; and Steenkamp's (2001) egalitarianism/hierarchy bears similarity with Hofstede's power distance dimension. In term of uncertainty avoidance, similarities exist between Hofstede's dimension and those of Inkeles and Levinson's (1969) primary dilemmas and conflicts; Clark's (1990) relation to risk; and Steenkamp (2001) uncertainty avoidance. However, Triandis (1995); Trompenaars (1997); Dorfman and Howell (1988), and Schwartz (1994); Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult's (1999) dimensions ignored the impact of uncertainty avoidance on societies' cultures. Juxtaposing Hofstede's long-term/short-term dimension shares commonality with Triandis' (1995) Confucian work dynamism; Trompenaars' (1997) attitudes to time; and Steenkamp's (2001) mastery/nurturance. However, Inkeles and Levinson (1969); Clark (1990); Dorfman and Howell (1988), and Schwartz (1994); Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult (1999) dimensions failed to capture the relevance of the long-term/short-term dimension in their studies.

2.7 Evaluating the impact of culture on business relationships

Given the multifaceted nature of culture and the extent to which it shapes society, it comes as little surprise that the related literature considers is to be an important factor in understanding the development of business relationships within an international context (Fregidou-Malama & Hyder 2015; Poplie et al., 2016; De Mooij, 2018). Popli et al (2016) elaborate that the wider the cultural distance between business partners, the harder it becomes to foster and nurture a cross-cultural business relationship. The intricate differences in communication, social norms and roles facilitated by culture tend to compound the challenges associated with business relationships (Fregidou-Malama & Hyder 2015). The likes of De Mooij (2018) maintain that good cross-cultural relationships seldom emerge by chance. These are instead said to be predicated upon greater effort and enthusiasm in understanding and acknowledging the inherent similarities and differences in cultural values between the parties involved. De Mooij (2018) points to empirical evidence which lends his claims support, adding that culturally sensitive companies have demonstrated better performance and success in foreign markets than

those with limited or no knowledge of cultural similarities and/or differences (De Mooij, 2018). Nguyen and Nguyen (2014) also offer empirical evidence to support this as within their study which relied on 297 Vietnamese exporters, it emerged that cultural awareness or empathy helps to increase trust between business partners. It further came to light that the greater the level of cultural sensitivity exhibited, the more positively this contributed to the relationship between Vietnamese exporters and their overseas business partners. This serves to further substantiate the importance of understanding cultural differences that underpin cross-cultural business relationships and how doing so   improve the relationship quality of the actors involved   (Conway and Swift, 2000; Gianetti, 2012; and Danik, 2015)   From a purely economic perspective, this is crucial as positive business interactions and relations are likely to increase trade volume between the countries (Tadesse and White, 2010). Whilst Fregidou-Malama & Hyder (2015) and Popli et al (2016) highlight the importance of culture and provide a commentary on just how this improves cross-cultural business dealings, very little information is provided in regard to specific factors. To elaborate, the authors do not explicitly state the factors that contribute to the creation of a positive cross-cultural business relationship, nor those that contribute to keeping such as relationship intact. This happens to also be the case when the confines are further narrowed to specific regions such as Turkey. A distinct 'gap' in the research thus emerges as few studied have sought to examine the factors that define and shape success for Turkish firms engaging in cross-cultural business dealings.

Conway, and Swift (2000); Pabian (2008); and Sarmento et al (2015) suggested that, cultural closeness and/or similarity with low level of physical distance between business partners has a positive influence on business relationship. Burca et al (2005), on the other hand argued that, two factors directly affect the quality of business relationships, including culture and prior experience. In analysing the impact of culture on business relationship, the central focus of Ford et al. (1998, 2003, and 2013) was on the cultural distance between home and target countries; Conway and Swift (2000) focused on psychic distance; whilst Iyer (2002) focuses on the target countries cultural environment. This clearly shows the divergence in views and emphasis placed on the influence of culture on business relationship by various theorists (Conway and Swift, 2000; Ford et al., 1998, 2003, and 2013; and Iyer, 2002). Therefore, this study has highlighted the gap in literature and presented in its finding's concrete arguments on the cultural factors that influence better business relationships.

The concept of cultural and psychic distance has been theorised, and conscientiously agreed by many theorists that, they are different phenomena (Prime, Obadia and Vida, 2009; Sousa and Bradley, 2006; Josiassen and Fletcher, 2010). Beckerman (1956) was the first to theorise the concept of psychic distance when analysing the trade interaction between European firms, and highlighted the impediments and complexities experienced by multinational companies' during their overseas engagements. In comparison, Simpson and Weiner (1989) proposed that the concept originated from the Greek word "psychic"- to mean mean soul and mind, and postulate that, it is the personal level of distance between people. The latter authors thus maintain that the difference in perception between individuals from the home and target country can be termed 'psychic distance'. Whilst a unified of psychic distance is yet to emerge, Sousa et al (2014) maintain that this is the sum of factors preventing or disturbing the flow of information between an organisation and the foreign market. In comparison, in an earlier study, Johanson and Vahlne (1977) define psychic distance as a psychic proximity between a firm and an overseas' market. O'Grady and Lane (1996) in their study gave the concept a new meaning and associated it with the learning difficulties experienced by companies in new markets. Often firms are said to make the mistake of relying purely on indicators such as demographics, education levels etc when examining the psychic distance. These are regarded as being relatively shallow indicators as the behaviour of prospective business partners cannot be reduced to quantitative factors (Sousa and Bradley, 2005).   In this respect, given the current lack of consensus, the current study will look to develop a clear and concise definition of the concept of psychic distance in order to the existing gap in literature.

Karolyi (2016) defined cultural distance as the difference between a home and target country's market due to the differences in cultures. In an earlier study, Ford (1984) defined cultural distance as the extent to which the norms and values of the two companies differ due to the difference in national characteristics. This is consistent with the views of Harvey and Griffith (2002), who described cultural distance as the difference between norm and values between two societies. In a later study, Sousa and Bradley (2006) aligned their definition with those offered by Ford (1984); and Harvey and Griffith (2002), insomuch that contrasting values between two countries resulted in a cultural distance. This implies the concept of cultural distance is only applicable at a national level (Hutzschenreuter et al., 2014). It is also interesting to note that Hofstede's (1980, 2001) earlier and later studies of the difference between nations articulate similar views. On the other hand, Ghemawat (2001) formulated the CAGE (Cultural, Administrative, Geographic and Economic) model to account for cultural

distance and highlighted four factors that have to be considered when evaluating differences between nations. These includes language, ethnicity, religion and social norms. Despite the fact that, one of his components is realistic, many theorists have argued about the validity and subtlety of the others (Lee, 2015; and Birkinshaw et al., 2016). It is indicative from the arguments of Conway and Swift (2000), cultural distance is a powerful determinant of successful business relationship, but one can also argue that, it is becoming forever elusive (Wells, 2016). Therefore, this study will theorise an appropriate definition, taking into cognisance impact of technology on the overall cultural distance debate.

Cultural distance, whilst tricky to define and measure, continues to be identified as a potential risk factor when it comes to international business in general. An inability to understand the term is likely to have negative implications for firms as far as foreign entry, investment as well as performance in a new market are concerned (Shenkar, 2001). Shenkar thus calls for the term to be modified in order to ensure that it does not go unheeded by businesses harbouring ambitions to operate within international markets. Medvedev (2015) is not as fixated on the actual terminology and instead argues that irrespective of the terminology employed in defining cultural distance, its impact on business relationship will be forever present and will always be a topical issue. In an earlier study by Conway and Swift (2000), they emphasised that, cultural distance tends to appear between business partners at the pre-relationship stages, but highlighted cultural empathy, awareness and respect, as fundamental to the medium level distance between business partners. They advocated the reduction of the distance, indicating its expansion can effectively reduce communication and increase intolerance, and highlighted personal attributes between business partners as critical to success.

Ford (1980) claimed that, the level of distance at the initial/formation stage of a business can be great and extensive between business partners and indicated that businesses must implement action plans to minimise the distance. To remedy this, the author suggests a specific strategy, one that entails the employment of locals. However, he argued that, the distance between partners at the expansion stage would be significantly minimised due to the reduction in the communication gap (Ford, 1980). In comparison, Lyer (2002) argued that despite the increased distance at the beginning of a business relationship, companies should reduce this distance by learning about the cultural environment of the target market. She therefore recommends cross-cultural training as the most appropriate approach when looking to reduce cultural distance. Lyer places emphasis on understanding culture and increasing one's awareness; this is viewed

by the author as being critical to business success, adding that its reduction from the pre-relationship to the expansion stage can be beneficial. This argument is consistent with the views of Edvinsson (1985); and Jia and Rutherford (2010) for whom, the process of building a successful long-term business relationship is dependent on the building of trust, and the ability to digest and adapt to the culture of the target market. Contrary to the arguments put forth by Lyer (2002); and Jia and Rutherford (2010), an earlier study by Arin̆o and de la Torre (1998) suggested culture had no direct influence on the development of a business relationship, though, it may have an impact on the origin and morals of people. These discrepancies in the definitions warrant a critical review of the concept, and therefore, this study attempts to fill the existing gap in literature specifically by focusing on Turkey.

Kanter (1994) too heeds the importance of understanding the culture of a target market, adding that this is crucial for businesses intending to create a strategic alliance/partnership. In her study, she compared the cultures of different historic markets/countries such as China, Europe and U.S.A., arguing that, understanding the disparity in these cultures allowed businesses to move up to the next level and build lasting relationships that eventually translate into success in foreign markets.

Goffman (2017) believes different national cultures lead to extensive differences between the people who are part of the strategic alliance, as they are subject to different sets of social institutions, including education systems, labour markets, and geographical mobility. These differences in national culture can act as a source of conflict and misunderstanding that can prevent the successful cooperation of the partners (Goffman, 2017). This is consistent with the views of Hofstede's (1980) study of cultural distance, in which he argued that, the difficulties, costs and risks associated with cross-cultural contact increase as greater differences emerge between individuals, groups or organisations (Stahl & Tung, 2015). This study intends to confirm the arguments of the various theorists and present empirical data that addresses the gap in the literature. The next section of this chapter will discuss the concept and types of business relationship and analyse its impact on businesses.

Section B – Business relationship

This section of the literature review will discuss the overall perspective of the business relationship from the perspectives of various theorists. It will also highlight the factors influencing business relationships and identify any gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

2.8 Overview of the concept of business relationship

A business relationship is said to be crucial in the modern business environment of today. The interconnected nature of markets and regions owed to advances in technologies such as the Internet, has left businesses competing for the same markets and customers as they race to differentiate themselves (Rugman & Verbeke, 2017). Ford and Richardson (2013) attempt to contextualise the importance of cooperation by adding that companies who fail to establish better relationships with others cannot sustain themselves in the marketplace for a long time. They highlighted problems relating to outsourcing, cost, time and a lack of expertise, as fundamental to building a successful business relationship due to interdependence in service/component delivery. Therefore, this research will identify and investigate the factors that influence cross cultural business relationships in Turkey and specifically cast focus upon the manufacturing sector and SMEs; in doing so, the research will focus on assessing the relationships of these SMEs with partners beyond Turkey. This is because understanding the power of relationships within such as context is crucial to the growth and success of businesses (Ford and Leonidou, 2013).

Chan (2016); and Goodman et al. (2016) note that companies normally begin establishing business relationships with each other under exceptional laws and circumstances, which allow them to define trade terms that are more profitable. As such, optimal profitability is achievable only when companies seek to establish partnerships with target overseas entities through sales and distribution, at least according to Hopkins (2017). In this respect, most global companies are not in a position to solely sustain their economic activity by means of their own resources. Interaction with peers and other companies is regarded as being crucial (Jones et al., 2014). Hawkins and Wand (2012) define the ways business can achieve such interaction and refer to outsourcing inputs/raw materials, as not all firms are ability to specialise and deliver all aspects within an industry, except by collaborating with others. Hawkins and Wand (2012) stress the fact that, most companies require improvements in product/service quality, which is achievable, sometimes, through collaboration with overseas' counterparts. They offer the third approach where companies use to interact with domestic/overseas' entities is by contracting/sub-contracting part of their operations. It is through this that businesses are able to establish ties with their counterparts, whether competitors or otherwise.

Despite the concept of the 'business relationship' being subjected to much attention within scholarship over the past few decades, much of these contributions have served to enrich

marketing and strategy related disciplines (Barkema et al., 2015; Håkansson et al., 2009; Baron et al., 2010; Guercini et al. 2014). Few have thus focused on actual tangible or empirical evidence where the business relationship is concerned; as a result, this following study will look to examine the business relationship and how this is pertinent to cultural studies.

2.9 An overview of Business-to-Business versus Business-to-consumer relationship

Lilien (1987); and Hutt and Speh (2004) distinguish the, business-to-business market from the business-to-consumer market; they consider these to differ in a number of ways including demand, product, customer type, services, and more importantly dynamics. As such, the authors maintain that both should be evaluated in different ways. Fill and Fill (2005) highlighted three elements used to distinguish a business-to-business from business-to-consumer market including derived, variable, and inelastic demand. They defined derived demand as products or services designed directly for consumer needs; whilst variable demand is the flexibility envisaged by businesses due the changes in consumer behaviour and the business environment; and inelastic demand is defined as the responsiveness of businesses to changes in customer or supplier tastes, for example, increase or decrease in price of raw materials. This implies that, variable and inelastic demand directly relates to business-to-business market, whilst the derived demand has relationship to business-to-consumer market (Frösén et al., 2016).

Chakravarty (2014) argued that, the buying process of the business-to-business market is different from that of the business-to-customer market, suggesting that, even the customer types are different within these markets. Trainor et al. (2019) reiterated that, in business-to-consumer markets, customers are targeted individually, and most consumers respond to price changes. As such the buying decision in the consumer market is based on the buyer's interaction with families or friends in a close environment. On the other hand, Neidell and Lunsford (1995); and Dwyer and Tanner (2002) suggested the buying process in the business-to-business market unlike the business-to-consumer market, takes a considerable period of time and tends to involve extensive analysis by several experts or group of experts. This implies that the use of group activities to analyse the data is a protracted and complex process that involves iterations compared to the business-to-customer market (Jackson et al., 1995). According to Kotler et al. (2015) this protraction and complexity may be due to the fact that the buying process in the business-to-business market consists of several units or divisions in

buying/purchasing or decision-making units of the organisations. In earlier studies conducted by Fill and Fill (2005); and Brennan et al. (2008), it was stressed that complexity is compounded by the long purchasing procedure, and that the product sizes are also dissimilar. Unlike the business-to-customer market, where a great number of the buyers make purchases in small quantities (Håkansson and Ostberg, 1975), the business-to-business market includes limited buyers, whose demand differs from each other (Håkansson and Ostberg, 1975). However, it can be argued despite the small number of buyers in the business-to-business market, the value and volume of trade and cash flow are far greater, and therefore, the quantity demanded creates a significant value for organisations (Jackson and Cooper, 1988).

2.10 Definition of Business Relationship

The definition of business relationship has never been straightforward, as many theorists define the concept in different ways, and review of several literature in the two decades, revealed that, there is no agreed definition (Birkland, 2015). Anderson and Narus (1991, p. 96) defined business relationship as the "whole activities where two companies or institutions form strong and extensive social, economic, service and technical ties overtime, with the intent of lowering total costs and/or increasing value, thereby achieving mutual benefit". In comparison, Grönroos (2000) defined business relationship as a relationship, which develops when a customer perceives that, a mutual way of thinking exists between customer and supplier or service provider. In an early study, Håkansson and Snehota (1995) defined business relationship as "a relationship" that is mutually oriented on the basis of the interaction between two reciprocally committed parties". A more recent and concrete definition of business relationship was advanced by Payne et al. (2017) that, it is the sum of the customer and supplier value including both tangible and intangible benefits and sacrifices, that exists in a relationship. Zolkiewski (2004) argued that, although the definition of the concept within the marketing context is difficult to accept but provides a general knowledge of the business relationship specification and context. This emphasise the need for coining a more acceptable definition to clarify the ambiguity and blurredness surrounding the concept. This study will use empirical evidence from the respondents' perspectives to articulate a better definition of business relationship.

2.11 Evaluating the importance of business relationship

According to Daft (2015) the business relationship is crucial to the functioning and survival of any company in today's volatile environment and should thus be considered a cornerstone of operations. Noe et al. (2017) agree that the business relationship allows companies to use other companies' resources to their advantage and enables them to gain competitive advantage. In an earlier study, Scheer et al. (2015) suggested that business relationships are irreplaceable, emphasising that, supplier and customer success in the market is dependent on the relationship they foster. However, Pearlson et al. (2016) argued that, despite several companies' recent focus on building external relationships with customers and suppliers, the traditional approach has always isolated events sellers and buyers. A number of theorists, for example, Gadde et al. (2003); Ford et al. (2013); Sousa and Castro (2015), established that the business relationship contributes to the success and growth of companies, and significantly contributes to their long-term success.

Nie & Lämsä (2015) are amongst theorists who emphasise interdependent relationships between organisations and the importance of focusing on time, as a successful relationship takes time, and the behaviour of the parties involved can affect future expectations and relationship. Liu et al. (2017) warn, despite the interdependent relationship that exists between the parties involved, decision-making is not unilateral, but collective. They emphasised that, business relationships are rarely constructed, but rather, evolve over time, and that through interaction, the actors involved have an impact on the character of the relationship, as over time its content and strength changes. On the other hand, Luhmann (2018) point to trust and commitment as being the building blocks to a good relationship, and, the fact that it always involves at least two individuals, one from each party/country, gives business relationship a social character. This implies that, for the relationship to be successful, both parties need to commit time and resources to establish, maintain, and develop the relationships between the companies (Huang & Knight, 2017). Reviewing the arguments of the theorists mentioned, it is evident, whilst Nie & Lämsä (2015) emphasises time as being critical to the business relationship, Luhmann (2018) placed emphasis on trust and commitment. Therefore, this study will look to build upon this and offer empirical evidence to highlight and substantiate the factors that are useful for building a good relationship.

Petri (2018) suggested that investments in relationships are cumulative, and interdependent. As such, commitments made in one relationship affects the company's opportunities to enter

into other relationships. In comparison, in an earlier study, Kang & Jindal (2015) argued that due to the commitment made by the parties involved, the cost of switching a business partner remains high. To sum up the argument, it is evident that establishing and developing a business relationship is a resource-intensive process, which involves two parties' investment in different ways (Lawson et al., 2015). Consequently, established relationships are important advantage for any company, and it is central to the future success of any business (Pearson, 2016).

2.12 Evaluation of the Business Relationship Development Process

A number of theorists, including Thompson (2017) and Wheelen et al (2017), have examined the concept of the business relationship development process and have argued that it is very important in helping our understanding of the concept and the actions of participants involved in the process. In that respect, Tanskanen & Aminoff (2015) emphasise that, developing and nurturing inter-firm network relationships among buyers-suppliers is increasing in importance, and that they [business relationships] are an integral part of operating strategies within business-to-business marketing. In terms of the successful development of business relationships,

De Vellis (2016) states that theorists have developed well supported models that define many relevant variables that influence the success or failure in a relationship. However, despite the overwhelming amount of theories and/or models regarding the conceptualisation of the business relationship process, there is no generally accepted theory of the manner in which international networks develop, varying from one school of thought to another (Liedtka, 2015). In the face of the confusion surrounding the concept, an earlier study carried out by Batonda and Perry (2003), categorised the theories of the process of business relationship development in a cross-cultural buyer-seller relationship context into three types, namely; joinings theory, stages theory, and states theory. The impact of each theory on cross-cultural buyer-seller relationships is systematically discussed below:

2.12.1 Joinings Theory

Duţă & Martínez-Rivera (2015) posit that, joining theory emphasises the significance of initiating the position of new members when joining a new network, as this can potentially affect the foundation of the relationship. Argyres et al. (2015) emphasises that the theory focuses on the entry processes of positioning, repositioning and exit within networks. However, in an earlier study, Thorelli (1986) argued that the dynamics of business networks

determines what happens at the start and that, the entry stage significantly influences what happens in the positioning, repositioning and exit of actors in the existing networks. Despite the significance of the theory to a number of scholars, Christensen et al (2015), and Johanson & Mattsson (2015) argue that the theory is not suitable for the process of business relationship development, due to the strategic challenges faced by entrants within the network. Johanson & Mattsson (2015) emphasise that it is difficult to determine whether the joining process focuses on entry, positioning, re-positioning and exit. There is a need to clarify this argument and therefore, this study will provide empirical evidence to substantiate this claim.

2.12.2 Stages Theory

Cavusgil & Knight (2015) note that stages theory is the most common business relationship process for firms and emphasise that the relationship between firms starts to develop and continues to develop until it becomes long term but indicate that sometimes the relationship dies early. Batonda & Perry (2003) suggest that there are two sub-categories for stages theory, including the life-cycle model and growth-stage model.

2.12.3 Life-Cycle Models

Lemaître et al. (2015) claimed that life cycle models are based on Darwinism, which posits that business relationships start and evolve over time. It is commonly used to describe the inter-organisational level of product and service development or industry-oriented products and services. This implies that the model focuses on product(s) or service(s), rather than interactions, effort and various factors which increase the chance of creating a business relationship (Johanson & Mattsson, 2015; Reim et al, 2015). In comparison, Tukker & Tischner (2017) argue that the models are based on the analogy of the life cycle of organisms/products and specified that the change process comprises of unavoidable phases including birth, growth, maturity and decline. In an earlier study conducted by Ellram (1991), he developed a conceptual framework of the life cycle model using eighteen salespersons in eight manufacturing companies, six of which were based in the USA, with one in France and Japan respectively.

Ellram (1991) suggested that the Product Life-Cycle Model is very useful for understanding and analysing the formation and development of the business relationship process by using prediction and statistical significance testing. He then categorised the model into Pre-partnering Decisions, Development, Commitment, Integration, and Business/Performance

Dissolution. Bendell (2017) claims that market regulations, desire between business partners and the product plays a crucial role at this stage in the process of developing a business relationship but warns that the relationship can end because of inefficient performance and desire. Van den Heuvel et al (2015) proposes that such a relationship can only be salvaged if companies are willing to introduce psychosocial change, which may be difficult to achieve in any social relationship. Reviewing the systematic presentation of the process of business relationships by various theorists, for example, Ellram (1991); Lemaître et al. (2015); and Tukker & Tischner (2017) is questionable, as many relationships have the tendency to decline without going through the highlighted phases. Therefore, this study will review the arguments of the theorists and aim to present concrete theoretical evidence.

2.12.4 Criticisms of the Life Cycle Models

Douglas (2015) argues that one of the criticisms of the model is that it was conducted on a small-scale using a mono-approach, which may not reflect a wider perspective using multiple methods. Hatch (2018) on the other hand, stresses that the use of questionnaires with responses obtained only from buyers does not mirror the picture of both parties involved in the transaction. In addition, Sanders et al (2016) critique that a significant downside of the model is the fact that the study was conducted in the manufacturing industry, which might not reflect what is obtained in other industries, as different kinds of businesses can give varied results.

2.13 Growth-Stages Models

Rauch & Hulsinkn (2015) suggest that the Growth-Stages Models are invaluable in analysing and assessing the roles of different factors in the process of developing business relationships. Further, Lazzeretti & Capone (2016) emphasise that the principal of the model is to focus on relationship development in inter-firm networks, which usually occurs in sequential/incremental and irreversible stages. Reviewing articles and publications illustrates that six major stages exists in the buyer-seller relationship process, which specifically focus on the growth stages in inter-firm network development (Wegner et al., 2015). A systematic comparative analysis of the six growth stages models are shown in Figure 2.2 (see appendix).

Molina-Morales et al. (2015) claim that one of the key strengths of six growth stages models is the insight they provides in understanding inter-firm network development, although only a few have been experimentally verified (Dwyer et al., 1987). It is important to emphasise that, as is in relational contracting theory/law (Burchardt et al., 2016), institutional economics

theory (Tang, 2017), and social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al, 2017), the models are based on literature from many disciplines, which is reflected in the multi-dimensional aspects of networks (Cui et al, 2016). However, the main criticisms of the models are that it is parochial in focus, as none of the studies explore the dynamics of business relationship beyond its twin states, despite the existence of triple and quadruple relationships in international marketing and purchasing (Hakansson and Johanson, 1992; Limerick and Cunnington, 1993). This implies that there is the need to move away from the more dyadic business relationships that most theorists are preoccupied with to a more dynamic assessment of the network relationships (Hakansson, 1987; and Ford, 1997). This study will therefore assess this gap and present a consistent argument beyond the dyadic approach used by past theorists.

Another criticism of the models is that none of the previous studies have examined the problem of how inter-organisational networks between the West (for example, the European Union) and a country like Turkey have developed over the years (Macchion et al, 2015). In that sense, although models provide knowledge and insights into the operationalisation of network relationships, only one theorist (Kanter, 1994) considers international networks (Turner & Pennington, 2015). This implies further that there is a need to examine the role of cultural dimensions between Turkey's and other countries' networks in order to understand how they differ culturally from each other (Almond & Verba, 2015). This study will evaluate the cultural dimensions between Turkey and other nations to address the existing gap in literature, as the scientific understanding of the concept of network relationship development is still in its infancy (Gandomi & Haider, 2015).

In conclusion, one can argue that, irrespective of the fact that the individual growth stage models can provide knowledge and insight into business relationships, they provide limited understanding of network development in international markets (Hohenthal et al, 2015). Therefore, this research will use Baker and Hart's (2008) generic model of inter-firm network development in international marketing due to its holistic and comprehensive approach when compared with any of the other six growth-stages models. For example, Baker and Hart's (2008) model was constructed of five stages, which cover the possible stages identified in the six growth-stage models.

One key strength of the Baker and Hart (2008) model lies in its precise description of the stage headings to reflect common activities, themes and other important aspects in the base models, although some of its headings such as 'Pre-relationship stage and ending stage' mirror the

extant models of Ford (1980) and Heide (1994). In addition, the reason for selecting Baker and Hart's (2008) model is that, the five-stage model offers the potential to further examine the inter-firm relationship development processes across a range of industries and cultures since other extant models have only used single industries and an individual culture. The author believes that the absence of a generally accepted model makes the Baker and Hart (2008) six-growth stages model the most suitable for the present study. The Baker and Hart (2008) model consists of five stages, including the Pre-relationship stage; attraction stage; a formation stage; expansion stage; and ending stage. Comparative analysis of the five stages is depicted in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Illustrating the process models of relationship development in business

Table 3.1 Process models of relationship development				
Ford (1980)	Frazier (1983)	Dwyer et al. (1987)	Borys and Jemison (1989)	Wilson (1995)
Pre-relationship	Pre-relationship stage	Review	Awareness		Search and selection
Attraction	Early stage		Exploration	Defining purpose	Defining purpose
Formation	Development stage	Implementation	Expansion	Setting boundaries	Setting boundaries
Expansion	Long-term stage	Outcomes	Commitment	Value creation	Value creation
Ending	Final stage			Hybrid stability	Hybrid stability
			Dissolution		

Source: Baker and Hart (2008, p. 42)

2.13.1 First Stage: Pre-Relationship

At this stage, there may be very limited interaction between the organisations, but they may be aware of each other's existence (Baker and Ford, 2008). It is argued that the distance between the two organisations may be affected by social and cultural distance; geographic distance; technology and time. Edvinsson (1985); Dwyer et al. (1987); and Claycomb and Frankwick (2010) argue that at this stage of a business, companies must first investigate potential partners, but must be careful in the selection process to ensure that they choose the most promising

candidate. Ford (2008) reiterates this, espousing that this stage of the business is characterised by a high level of inertia and high levels of uncertainty.

2.13.2 The Second Stage: Attraction

Baker and Hart (2008) suggest that the concept of attraction plays a critical role in explaining the relationship development process. Both Dwyer et al (1987) and Halinen (1997) espouse their position, derived from Social Exchange Theory, that attraction explains why businesses initiate and develop relationships, as some degree of attraction necessitates the development of initial communication, while on-going attraction determines whether the parties involved are willing and motivated to maintain a relationship. Dwyer et al (1987) emphasises that this stage requires communication and bargaining, development and exercise, norm development and expectation development.

Gronroos (1982) points out that the attraction stage is heavily dependent on personal branding and selling, with the ability to attract other firms depending on the performance of the company's sales representatives. In a later study, Lyer (2002) suggests at the attraction stage, partners put some ground rules in place about their business relationship. In addition, Chang and Lin (2008) stress at this stage of the relationship, firms should start to offer each other specification of product(s) or service(s) and start negotiations. During this phase, companies present their persuasion skills as starting new business relationships with other parties may bring concerns to those involved, considering no previous relationships existed (Millman and Wilson, 1995; Andersen, 2001; Ford et al., 1998, 2013; Kaunonen, 2014).

Andersen and Kumar (2006) propose that at the attraction stage, firms and their potential partners start to build trust and clearly present their expectations and priorities to the future relationship. Ford et al (1998, 2013) however argues that at this stage of the relationship, the negotiations between the parties either can end on a successful note or be terminated. Claycomb and Frankwick (2010) state that getting a success deal at this stage is useful for both parties because they can consider each other as potential future candidates. However, Ford (2013) warns, even if this stage ends with placing an order, it does not necessarily mean that both parties are fully committed and may still view each other as antagonists/strangers (Jia and Rutherford, 2010). Potential problems and conflicts of interest may arise at this level (Dwyer et al., 1987). Ford et al (2013) stresses that at this stage, both parties may doubt each other.

Both Iyer (2002) and Kaunonen (2014) claim that at the attraction stage, the learning process becomes the overarching premise, which may be behavioural, non-learning or cognitive learning, based on the potential of the partner. Iyer (2002) stresses that the learning process is beneficial to the parties involved, as business relationships can develop into a friendship of sorts. Kanter (1994) expounds upon this, stating that during the learning process, companies might evaluate the strategic capabilities, compatibility and chemistry of one another. Das and Teng (2002) point out that at this stage, partners start to set up alliances for long-term relationships. However, Pett and Dibrell (2001) warn that external factors, including national culture, environmental conditions, government policies, market specification and products/services could affect the whole learning process.

2.13.3 The Third Stage: Formation

The formation stage is the final stage before the relationship is formally established and at this stage, both parties are ready to negotiate an agreement (Das and Teng, 2002). Claycomb and Frankwick (2010) and Das and Teng (2002), as well as Kaunonen (2014) suggest that at this stage of the business, several trial orders are made in order to facilitate the development of a beneficial process. Jeske and Axtell (2016) state that trial orders are made at this stage, as a way of testing the relationship and building trust. Khalique et al. (2015) note that at this stage, the relationship is still in its infancy, despite success of the previous stages, as the partners are still in the process of familiarising themselves with one another while carefully evaluating any gathered information.

Howson (2017) advises both parties to sign the contract which covers all the business requirements, after the negotiation process. The contract is usually comprehensive and includes the concerns of both parties (Ford, 1980; Ford et al., 1998, 2013; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994), but in some cases, the contract can be verbal (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Johanson & Mattsson (2015) caution however, that the process could take longer than expected due to business demands, as both parties may be required to provide further details for the deal to materialise. At this stage, there is the possibility for either growth or termination of the business relationship, as there are no guarantees that the business relationship will develop and continue to the next level (Das and Teng, 2002; Ford 1980). Unlike Baker and Hart (2008), Zineldin (2002) describes this stage as the engagement stage, where positive attitudes between business partners can lead to contract agreement with active negotiation ensuing to address any outstanding concerns.

2.13.4 The Fourth Stage: Expansion

Both Andersen (2001) and Claycomb and Frankwick (2010) describe how, after the three previous stages, the relationship between the actors becomes more stable and sustainable, as they show high levels of commitment due to the development of an amicable atmosphere between the respective parties. Claycomb and Frankwick (2010) argue that this stage tends to foster an increase in informal communication as the relationship gradually become personalised by both parties, and the actors start to make regular visits to each other as a show of commitment to the long-term relationship (Andersen, 2001; Kaunonen, 2014).

Conway and Swift (2000) as well as Hashim & Tan (2015), argue that at this stage of the business, trust and commitment during the developmental process are significant factors that enhance the relationship and act as a conduit for fostering a successful long-term partnership. Conway and Swift (2000) emphasise that at this stage, increased levels of trust and commitment influences the actors to take high level risks in enhancing their respective relationship. In an earlier study by Dwyer et al. (1987), a similar argument was presented wherein the author posited that a high level of trust and commitment, as well as having a positive experience of the actors in the previous stages, significantly influences the willingness of the parties to invest in the relationship. Borys and Jemison (1989) suggest that the desire and willingness to take high level risks can increase trade volume and lead to a strategic competitive advantage, which is unachievable independently.

Ariño & de la Torre (1998) propose that trust between business partners can potentially lead to the adjustment of the distribution channel or service delivery based on the partner's market needs. This adjustment is necessary as it increases the efficiency and quality of the relationship between business partners (Ariño de la Torre, 1998; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Ariño de la Torre (1998); and Iyer, (2002) argue that at this stage, understanding quality of service delivery requires continuous learning between the business partners in order for them to come to an understanding regarding their individual capabilities and capacity. Ford (1980); Ford et al. (1998, 2003, 2013); and Kaunonen (2014) conclude that trust and continuous learning sustains a relationship, which is followed by the adoption of ground rules. Change and Lin (2008) warn however, that despite a relationship being established, the partners should be aware of the challenges and problems (e.g. resource inadequacies and disagreements) faced by each party and should take precautionary actions to limit or reduce any harm to the partnership.

2.13.5 The Fifth Stage: Ending

The concept of ending a relationship has attracted the attention of several scholars within marketing literature in the past decade (Verhoef et al, 2015), who are mostly process-oriented rather an end in itself (Greco et al., 2016). According to Means (2017), there is a likelihood that a business relationship can end without being completely final; that is to say that the bond or link between parties can be maintained to a certain degree, with the possibility of a reignition or reengagement still very much possible. Several researchers have coined terminologies for this stage of the relationship, including switching, exiting, dissolution, termination, fading, defection, disengagement, breakup, divorce, and relationship de-marketing (Ford, 1987; and Baker and Hart, 2008). Crane & Matten (2016) believe that the propagation and use of the terminology interchangeably is problematic, as it does not present a consistent argument acceptable to all. Ferguson (2018) warns that theorists should agree on a common acceptable terminology and therefore proposes that the use of 'ending' in describing this stage of the relationship. He suggests that 'ending' could cover any kind of relationship dissolution and in all types of relationships, irrespective of the justification for ending the relationship. Crane & Matten (2016) claim that other terminologies, including switching, exiting, dissolution, termination, fading, defection, disengagement, divorce and relationship de-marketing, cannot be described as specific types of relationship breakdown, which will help to specify and focus empirical research evidence, and further our understanding of the processes involved in ending a relationship. This implies that ending is a process while dissolution is the terminal state (Sweeny et al, 2015). Gilpin (2016) reiterates that relationships are dissolved when links between the two actors ceases to exist and no resource ties/bonds exist between the two companies. However, it must be noted that it may take time for this state to be achieved, and sometimes, although relationships end, they are not dissolved (Waldo, 2017).

Frazier (1983) and Kaunonen (2014) suggest that at this stage, dissatisfaction of business partners and lack of trust drives the termination of the business relationship, and often, this can be due to an imbalance in power and benefit. Das and Teng (2002) outline four solutions for the breakdown of relationships, including when the relationship reaches maturity and the inability of partners to adapt to the changing environment ultimately making it harder to maintain the relationship; when companies change their foundations and ground base rules or need radical change from traditional practices; decline in the volume of business and the

market condition(s), which can lead to conflict and diminishing responsibilities; and when both parties agree that there is no rational solution and/or need to keep the business relationship.

Bell et al (2018) suggest that relationship ending is a representation of an important area of research, whether it is between two organisations, between a service provider and a client or between a mass marketer and a consumer. Daspit et al (2016) claims that, relationship ending, whether unilateral or mutually agreed, is extremely important as how the relationship is managed may impact on the brand image and reputation of the company, and on its future ability to forge new relationships. Therefore, a smooth exit is fundamental not only in regards to building new future relationships, but can minimise the damage occurring to the exiting party , the other party and the connected network (Brown & Duguid, 2017).

In conclusion, theories in the literature regarding inter-firm network development stages do not appear to provide a firm foundation in understanding how international marketing networks develop (Galkina & Chetty, 2015). This implies that there is the need to explore other theories.

2.14 States theory

This theory holds the notion that cross-cultural business relationships are unpredictable; this means that at any point the relationship can enter an unpredictable 'state', such that each state is only the condition that holds at a given point in time (Batonda and Perry, 2003; and Kaunonen, 2014). The terminology 'states' mirrors Edvardssonet al.'s (2008) and Polonskyet al.'s (2010) use of the terms "status" and "phase". Batonda and Perry, (2003a) and Palmer (2007) argue that this is because the development of states is very complex. However, the first and final states can be relatively understandable, as they tend to emphasise different states of the relationship (Flora, 2017). Rosson (1986) categorises states theory into three, including beginning, developing, and ending.

2.14.1 Beginning State

According to Evans (2018), the beginning state represents the starting point of a business relationship with a partner and it is at this state that actors search to identify potential business partners. Kaunonen (2014) contests this, finding that business partners require companies to use intra and/or inter-organisational resources, and emphasises that prospective business partners should be evaluated by companies to assess their suitability for business using a cost and benefit analysis. In their respective studies, Ford and Rosson (1982) as well as Niederkofler (1991) refer to the beginning state as a negotiating state, where partners do not

know each other well, and emphasise that at this state of the relationship, companies tend to take initial steps to promote communication and discuss regulations for their businesses. The findings of Ford and Rosson (1982) and Halinen (1994) divided the beginning state into two parts, including a pre-relationship and initiation phase, and indicated the former is a state of finding the most suitable partner where communication and trust are still developing, whilst the latter is the state when negotiation between the parties begins.

2.14.2 Developing State

Flora (2017) states that this is the second state used to promote and/or foster business relationships between partners, which he also describes as the middle state. In their earlier study, Batonda and Perry (2003a, 2003b) divided this state of the business into two types, including development and maintenance. They suggest that the former is the state when companies start to build personal relationship with each other, which enhances trust and commitment and creates the potential for stronger ties between the partners, whilst the latter increases business volume as trust and personal interaction between staff of the two companies continues to improve. They further argue that at this state of the relationship, companies on either side begin to modify and adjust their regulations to fit their needs.

In comparison, an earlier study conducted by Ford and Rosson (1982) established that the middle state consists of three parts, including the growing state, the static state, and the troubled state. They believed that, the growing state is where business relationships are established, trade volume rise and business activities between business partners increase, suggesting that at this state, the relationship between the partners is neutral. They reiterate that at this state of the relationship, there is increased communication between both companies on both an organisational and personal level, and that they [the companies involved] tend to acknowledge responsibility towards each other.

At the static stage, Ford and Rosson (1982) acknowledge that the relationship between the firms continues to be stabilised, and claim that at this state of the relationship, trade volumes, trust and communication are at their highest levels between the companies. On the other hand, Ford and Rosson (1982); and Halinen (1994) refer to the troubled state as one that occurs due to the effect of negative internal or external factors such as financial crises that might threaten the business relationship. They outline how this state has the potential to cause sales and

profits to decrease, communication to breakdown, and sometimes causes a total collapse in the relationship due to issues of trust and commitment between the partners.

2.14.3 The End State

Batonda and Perry (2003) define this state of the business relationship as the end/terminal/inactive state and argue that analysis of the costs and benefits between the two companies is crucial at this state, as it enables them to reach an agreement and understanding beneficial to both parties. Jap and Ganesan (2000); Samaha, Palmatier, and Dant (2011) describe how a negative relationship state demonstrate low levels of trust, commitment, and norms often resulting in some kind of failure in a relationship. Baylis, Smith, & Owens (2017) stress that low state relationships tend to end in succeeding periods, if there are no commonalities between the partners, and if they easily find replacements. Nevertheless, Cuevas (2018) warns that B2B relationships take a protracted period to develop and obtaining replacement of channel partners can be complex, as there is potential for maintaining a negative state with transaction still taking place between the two entities, despite the unhealthy feelings when interacting. Rapp et al (2015) suggest that this unhealthy or negative state could push customers to seek alternative channels that provide better services. Frazier (1983) believes that the relationship might persist, if one partner is highly dependent on the other, and emphasises that, depending on the situation, there is a tendency for performance in a negative state to be divergent depending on the level of dependence. Cuevas (2018) claims such performance might resemble a mirage, if they fail to improve on their relations, and can lead to dissolution if potential replacement partners are identified. Nevertheless, she emphasises that some companies prefer freezing over termination of the relationship with partners, as it creates the opportunity for rekindling the relationship in the future.

2.15 Analysing the quality of business relationship

The quality of business relationship can be examined using several factors, including customer loyalty, trust, value creation and the sustainability of the relationship between the partners (Crosby et al., 1990; Jap et al., 1999; and Atanasopoulou, 2009). Despite the usefulness of the theory that continues to shape our understanding of the business development process, there is limited consensus among theorists/academics where the most appropriate factors influencing factors are concerned (Dwyer et al., 1987; Kumar et al., 1995; Moliner et al., 2007). In comparison, Crosby et al. (1990); Geyskens et al. (1999); and Hewett et al. (2002) highlighted

trust, conflict reduction, cooperation, investment desire, sustainability of the business relationship, information sharing and increased communication as pivotal factors in influencing the quality of business relationship. It is evident from the arguments of the theorists, for example, Atanasopoulou (2009); and Hewett et al. (2002), there are still divergence in views among theorists. Therefore, this study will narrow the gap in discourse and highlight the factors that influences the quality of business relationship.

Atanasopoulou (2009) states that satisfaction; trust; and commitment are core factors that increases and/or influences the quality of business relationship. However, Svensson et al (2013) suggest, despite the usefulness of satisfaction, trust and commitment, business relationships are always uncertain and unpredictable. Ha and Muthaly, (2008); Sanchez-Garcia et al. (2007) purport that satisfaction is a priority factor among the three factors, although they are all useful in cementing a better relationship between partners. Other factors, including degree, power dependence, applicable business strategies and exchange of information between companies, have been highlighted by Bruggen et al. (2005) and Kumar et al. (1995); Anderson and Weitz (1989), and Kumar et al. (1995); Lai (2007) and Leonidou et al. (2008); and Rodriques et al. (2006) respectively. Munin (2014) stated that, all the factors are complex and interrelate with each other and therefore play a significant part in influencing the quality of the business relationship.

Other theorists, for example, Ashnai et al. (2009); Leung et al. (2005); and Cannon et al. (2010), have reiterated that cultural factors are vital to the development and maintenance of the cross-culture business relationship. In their study, Ashnai et al. (2009) claimed the factors that influences Iranian, Russian, and Chinese companies' expectations and attributes are trust, satisfaction and profit. For example, profit is more important to Russian companies than trust, whilst Chinese companies' value "Xinyong" (personal trust), as an important aspect to extend and cement the buyer- seller relationship (Leung et al., 2005). This disparity in views among the theorists requires further empirical evidence to substantiate or refute these claims. Therefore, this study addresses the existing gap in literature.

Håkansson and Snehota (1995) argued that, maintaining a business relationship is challenging and difficult, as the future relationship between businesses is blurred and unclear. The business relationship is seldom stagnant and tends to be dynamic. Kaunonen (2010, 2014); Yu et al. (2013); and Voldnes (2014) suggested that choosing a close business partner is not always easy for companies, and highlighted five factors, including trust, commitment,

communication, satisfaction and adaptation as useful for enhancing the quality of a business relationship. Therefore, this study will discuss and focus on these five factors to critically evaluate their implications in enhancing the quality of cross-cultural Turkish business relationships. This is touted by many theorists as critical for a lasting relationship. This is useful, as it will give the researcher the opportunity to evaluate and analyse the implications of these factors on the quality of the cross-cultural relationship fostered by Turkish companies. In addition, a deep analysis and evaluation of these factors will give the researcher the opportunity to identify the existing gap in literature and present a more coherent and consistent acceptable empirical evidence. A systematic evaluation of the five factors are presented below:

2.15.1 Trust

Moorman et al. (1992) defined trust as the willingness to rely on a business partner who has positive credit. They argued that trust is fundamental to cooperation; without trust, business partners are unlikely to even get their relationship off the ground. Mayer et al. (1995) on the other hand defined trust as a group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enables one party to have influence over another within some specific domain. Leuthesser (1997) purported that, skills, competencies and credibility of the business partner creates a platform for building trust, which he argued, are key contributors to improving the quality of a business relationship and marketability. In an earlier study, Dwyer et al. (1987) highlighted trust as one of the most important factors in fostering a successful business relationship, emphasising that it has significant effects on business relationship stability. Anderson and Weitz (1989) reiterated that trust is symbolic to the sustainability of any partnership agreement and potentially increases the quality of the business relationship. Zhao and Cavusgil (2006) concluded that, trust building plays a vital role in reducing problems between cross-cultural business partners and contributes to enhancing satisfaction. This study will assess these existing gaps in literature, and critically evaluate the validity and reliability of the arguments made by the theorists.

Monczka et al (1998) state that trust contributes positively to enhancing business relationships. Liang et al. (2009) claim trust is the most indispensable factor in business relationship development especially during foundation stages for firms operating internationally, as it serves as the basis for confidence building. Ganesan and Hess (1997) indicated that, there are different kinds of trust that exist between the buying organization, selling organisation, and sales representative. Voldnes (2014) pointed out the difference between the buyer and seller's

cultural background and how this can significantly influence the business relationship positively or negatively when companies transact business. Sako (1992); and Sirdeshmukh et al (2002) postulate that three components are crucial to strengthen the business relationships, including credibility, which is the business partners capacity to do business with other parties; integrity, which refers to business partners action against previous promises; and benevolence, which is the morality in adjusting to the new conditions of business relationship. The researcher will present an empirical data to substantiate the claims made by the theorists.

Invariably, Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) suggested trust starts when prospective business partners maintain their promises on the right level, which can be used a major factor in improving the quality of the relationship. Håkansson and Ford (2002) argue that building trust with business partners requires appropriate knowledge and understanding of social variables, time and personal experience. Harridge-March (2006) emphasised that social variables, time and the personal experience of the actors is vital for creating trust between the parties involved in the transaction. A number of researchers have argued that these factors are pivotal to building trust, which positively influences the quality of communication between business partners that can lead to achieving mutual long-term benefits (Cannon and William, 1999; Fritz and Fischer, 2007). In comparison, Holste and Fields (2010); and Mansur (2013) pointed out that trust is essential in the exchange of knowledge and experience between parties but warned that it will be highly risky to start or maintain a long-term business relationship without the strategic factor that is trust. In earlier research conducted by Ganessan (1994), he proclaimed in business-to business-markets, trust is advantageous to companies in three ways. Firstly, it reduces risk between the parties, it also enhances confidence between parties, and eliminates transaction cost. All of which are regarded by Ganessan (1994) as being useful in improving the short-term and long-term relationship between companies. This research will assess the existing gap in literature and present empirical evidence to substantiate the claim.

2.15.2 Commitment

Various scholars have highlighted and promulgated the validity of commitment as fundamental to promoting a successful business relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Ford et al., 2013; Kaunonen, 2014). Commitment has a positive effect in increasing satisfaction levels between both parties (Selnes, 1998). Anderson and Weitz (1992) defined commitment as the desire to develop a stable relationship coupled with the willingness to make short-term sacrifices to maintain the relationship. In comparison, Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as an

exchange partnership between two entities involved in an ongoing relationship, which warrants maximum efforts to maintain the relationship.

This implies commitment is a significant factor that increases and provides development, continuity, and prosperity between parties, and positively contributes to maintaining the expectations of the buyer and seller's long-term relationship (Geyskens et al., 1996). Rodriques et al. (2006) argued there is a direct correlation between commitment and business relationship satisfaction, and in his research, he divided commitment into three categories, including organisational commitment, affective and continuance commitment. Fullerton (2003); and Vesel and Zabkar (2010) defined effective commitment as the emotional loyalty expressed by one party towards its business partners, including the willingness/desire to maintain the relationship without any pre-conditions. On the contrary, continuance commitment requires obligations, including scarcity of product/service and high switching costs, from partners in order to maintain the relationship (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997). Dewi (2013) theorised that these obligations forces customers to continue the relationship. However, research shows that continuance commitment negatively contributes to customer loyalty and trust, and they argued these are not stable or strong, as existing players, entering the market, can be exposed to unreliable business partners (Geyskens et al., 1996; and Rodriques et al., 2006). On the other hand, Fullerton (2005a) defined affective commitment as the seller's recognition of the positive contribution of the customer/buyer in order to gain their loyalty. It becomes clear from the arguments of the theorists that; a fundamental gap exists in literature. Therefore, this study will provide empirical evidence to address any confusion surrounding the concept.

2.15.3 Communication/information sharing

Mohr and Spekman (1994); Conway and Swift (2000); and Voldnes (2014) suggested that one of the key factors responsible for improving the business relationship is quality of communication between business partners, including credibility of information sharing, timeliness, accuracy, and the extent to which the partners are actively and effectively engaged in exchanging information. A number of researchers postulated that, deep and broad communication between parties involved in business and degree of knowledge exchange is directly related to satisfaction gained from the relationship (Monczka et al., 1998; Dash et al., 2007; Voldnes, 2014). Lages et al. (2005); and Voldnes (2014) emphasised that, cross-cultural business relationships are enhanced by the level of communication between the buyer and

seller and suggested that, deep information sharing builds trust and confidence in the relationship. Perks (2000); and Voldnes (2014) reiterated that, information sharing and interaction between firms requires not only meaningful understanding of the core features of the companies, but also timely, frequent, formal and informal level of exchange are vital to relationship improvement.

A number of researchers have also pointed to the significant role high quality information sharing between business partners play in enhancing the long-term strategic of the business relationship (Conway and Swift, 2000; Hunt et al., 2006; Sin et al., 2006; Ndubisi, 2007; Voldnes, 2014). Lages et al. (2005) highlighted that, high level of information exchanging, or communication helps business partners to solve the problem and understand the features of the business. This implies that communication enhances mutual understanding amongst partners and promotes a more fruitful and lasting relationship (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). This study, will therefore, investigate the significance of information sharing and communication to understand the underlying issues faced by Turkish entities engaged in cross-cultural trade.

Conway and Swift (2000) claimed the types and styles of communication feedback received from a sender is essential to building a formal business relationship. Ruekert and Walker (1987); and Voldnes (2014) divided communication between business partners into two groups. Formal communication this relates to issues linked with work agreements, meetings and written official materials, whilst informal communication is related to personal issues such as family or personal interest. Voldnes (2014) argued that, formal communication is often planned and sent through official written channels (e.g. e-mail, letter); whilst informal communication is unplanned and sudden. A number of researchers suggested that, in cross-cultural business environment, the degree of communication between business partners, whether on formal or informal level, is crucial to the company's success due to the complexity of foreign market conditions and/or cultural differences (Voss et al., 2006; Mehta et al., 2006; Voldnes 2014). Voldnes (2014) argued that, better communication between partners helps reduce misinterpretation and conflict, and potentially eradicate low level of satisfaction between the firms.

2.15.4 Satisfaction

Geyskens et al. (1999) viewed satisfaction as the positive result gained or obtained by companies after fostering a successful long-term business relationship, and argued that, it directly affects the future business relationship of the counterparts involved in the transaction.

They pointed out, if the business partners are satisfied with the performance of each other during the relationship, it can trigger their desire to extend or increase business activities. On the other hand, Abdul-Muhmin (2005) indicated that dissatisfaction from one of the parties involved in the transaction might lead to the termination of the business relationship. Voldnes (2014) proposed satisfaction plays a significant role in influencing future business relationship and performance. A vast body of research conducted between 1970 and 1996 reveals satisfaction as the most significant factor in measuring the quality of a relationship, as it eliminates conflict between the partners (Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Ganesan, 1994; and Geyskens et al., 1999). This study will explore and present empirical evidence to determine the significance of satisfaction in Turkish business cross-cultural relationship.

Mehta et al (2006) noted that, satisfaction is difficult to measure in cross-cultural business relationships due to differences in culture and perceptions. Geyskens and Steenkamp (2000) stated that there are two types of satisfaction experienced in international business, including economic and non-economic. They argued that, economic satisfaction mainly comes from profit derived from the transaction and the potential to increase/expand the business relationship with a partner.

On the other hand, they defined the non-economic satisfaction as the informal closeness and working relationship enjoyed by both parties when engaged in the business transaction. Rodriques et al (2006) suggested that there is a strong relationship between economic and non-economic satisfaction, and emphasised that, if the partners do not only make profit in business and are also emotionally dissatisfied, can lead to the likelihood of terminating the relationship. This implies, companies need to focus on not only the economic satisfaction of their partners, but also the non-economic aspect in order to foster a long-term relationship (Anderson and Mittal, 2000). In addition, it is important to highlight several studies, have theorised satisfaction to include level of trust and commitment (Tohidinia and Haghighi, 2011; and Voldnes, 2014); and suggested other variables such as information sharing and empathy (Conway and Swift, 2000; and Voldnes, 2014); and power distance (Kumar et al., 1995; Lai, 2007; Leonidou et al., 2008). This implies that, satisfied companies are most likely to receive positive feedback from their business partner than dissatisfied ones (Tohidinia and Haghighi, 2011).

2.15.5 Adaptation

Brennan and Turnbull, (1999); and Canning and Brennan (2004) suggested that, adaptation is one of the most important factors that help develop an ongoing business relationship, and argued that, it is what makes researchers interested in examining the performance of buyer and seller performance. Several researchers proclaimed that, adaptation is the process that requires one of the parties in the transaction to modify and adapt its business behaviour to that of the counterpart in order enhance performance and foster a better business relationship (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999; Schmidt et al., 2007, Viio and Grönroos, 2016). Viio and Grönroos (2016) reiterated that, during the adaptation process, sharing information and maintaining a good level of communication between the parties is very important. They warned that, without appropriate information sharing and increased level of communication, adaptation would become a difficult process for both parties involved in the transaction. Canning and Brennan (2004);.and Román and Iacobucci (2010), claimed that, it is virtually impossible for one party to sell into another market without adapting to the market condition of the other party and modify its products/services to the needs and expectations of the customers in the foreign market. Several researchers have claimed that good adaptation to partnership and market demands make a relationship formidable and strong, which can act as barriers for alternative suppliers to break the relationship (Hallen et al., 1988; and Hallen et al. 1991). The next section will present a schematic diagram of the factors that influences the business relationship.

2.16 A schematic representation of the factors influencing business relationship from the literature review

The schematic diagram in Figure 2.2 depicts the arguments advanced by previous theorists about the factors influencing the business relationship. The factors identified by earlier theorists in Figure 2.2 compared with the findings of this study. This distinction was necessary in order to show the new and unique contributions made by this study. Consequently, the factors identified in the findings and analysis demonstrates this study's contributions to knowledge. The gap analysis in Table 2.3 further shows the distinction between the two arguments.

Table 2.3 provides a comprehensive summary of the research gap, the sources of data supporting the need for further research, the research themes and sub-themes, and the

contributions of the study. This is necessary to ensure that a clear contribution of this study by identifying the gaps from the works of prior researchers.

Figure 2.2: A schematic representation of the factors influencing business relationship
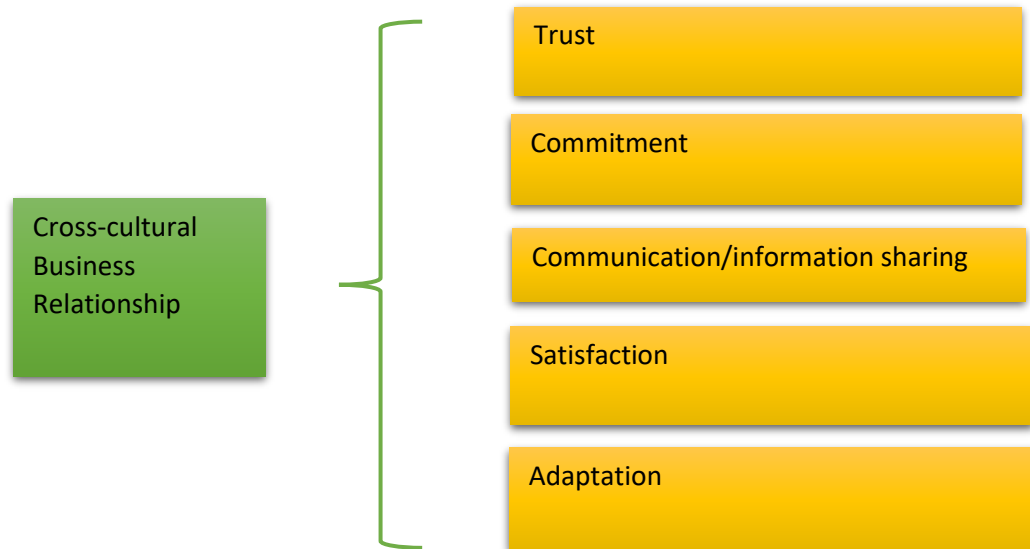
Table 2.3: Identifying Gaps in the literature review

Theme	Sub-themes from literature	Contributions of this study	Gap	Source of data supporting the need for further research in this area
Trust	Credibility, skills, competencies, stability	The results of this study build on the work of earlier theorists by establishing that trust remains the foundation of the business relationship	Trust has been highlighted as a significant factor that enables one party to have an influence over another within some specific domain and therefore, it is important to examine the influence of trust on the behaviour of Turkish SME entrepreneurs	Moorman et al. (1992); Mayer et al (1995); Voldnes (2014)
Commitment	Validity, satisfaction stability, short-term sacrifices, exchange	The results of this study build on the work of earlier	Commitment has been shown to have a positive effect in increasing satisfaction between entities engaged in	Dwyer et al., (1987); Ford et al.

partnership	theorists by establishing that commitment is an outcome that depends on ongoing satisfaction in the business relationship.	business relationship, and therefore, it is important to examine its impact on the cross-cultural behaviour of Turkish SME entities	(2013); Kaunonen (2014); Selnes (1998); Anderson and Weitz (1992); Morgan and Hunt (1994)
Communication/information sharing	Quality of communication, credibility, timeliness, accuracy, active engagement, knowledge exchange	Once again, the results of this study build on the work of earlier theorists by establishing that choices made around interaction with business partners is crucial to the business relationship. The importance is heightened in a cross-cultural business relationship due to the ambiguity and lack of familiarity associated with international business and trade.	Communication/information sharing has been highlighted by various theorists that, as key to improving business relationship partners, and therefore, investigating how it affects the relationship between Turkish SME entrepreneurs and their business partners is germane	Mohr and Spekman (1994); Conway and Swift (2000); and Voldnes (2014); Monczka et al. (1998); Dash et al., (2007); Voldnes (2014)
Satisfaction	Relationship quality, conflict reduction, profit, informal closeness	It is further brought to light that satisfaction matters and this hinges	Satisfaction has been shown by theorists as fundamental to fostering successful long-term business relationship, and therefore, presenting	Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Ganesan, 1994; and

		on a number of factors, beyond obvious factors such as price and value of money.	empirical evidence to justify the arguments raised by extant theorists is important	Geyskens et al., 1999); Geyskens and Steenka mp (2000)
Adaptation	Behaviour modification, performance enhancement, information sharing, good communication	In keeping with previous studies, it is established that adaptation plays a key role in prolonging a cross-cultural business relationship.	A number of theorists suggested the centrality of adaptation to enhancing business performance and fostering a better business relationship. Therefore, undertaken an investigation to assess its impact on the behaviour of Turkish SME entrepreneurs will be useful.	Brennan & Turnbull, 1999; Schmidt et al., 2007, Viio and Grönroos, 2016). Viio and Grönroos (2016)

2.17 Research Questions, Rationale and Gap of the study

A review of the literature identified five factors as critical to influencing cross-cultural business relationship, including trust, commitment, satisfaction, communication/information sharing, and adaptation. It is evident from literature that each of these factors contributes and/or affects the building of cross-border cultural relationship between businesses. These factors have also been highlighted by Moorman et al. (1992), Mayer et al (1995), and Voldnes (2014) for the domain of the trust; Joe (2019), and Peter (2019) for the sphere of commitment; Joe (2019), and Peter (2019) for the sphere of communication/information sharing; Joe (2019), and Peter (2019) for the sphere of satisfaction; and Joe (2019), and Henry (2019) for the sphere of adaptation. However, it is important to state that, up to the time of this research; the above factors are yet to be empirical tested in relation to their influence on Turkish SMEs' cross-cultural business relationship. It is due to these inadequate and incomplete arguments about these factors in extant literature that, this study seeks to review the gaps.

2.18 Rationale for the research

2.18.1 Aim and objectives of the research

2.18.1.1 Research aim

The aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gap in literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships between Turkish manufacturing SMEs and their business partners in the European Union, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

1.18.1.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- To analyse whether Trust and adaptation are critical to Turkish SMEs fostering better business relationship with their business partners.
- To evaluate whether commitment and satisfaction influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.
- To assess whether communication/information sharing influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.
- To provide appropriate conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

2.19 Research Questions

?

Based on the literature review, the following research questions were formulated to address the objectives of the research:

RQ1 What is the influence of Trust on Turkish SMEs relationship with their overseas counterparts?

Trust is fundamental to fostering business relationship in Turkish society, as it is not only the cornerstone for establishing a sustainable relationship, but also provides the basis for confidence building. A number of researchers have emphasised the role trust plays in influencing business relationship between cross-cultural entities (Dwyer et al., 1987; and Leuthesser, 1997), but literature and empirical research set against the backdrop of the Turkish SME sector continues to be scant and lacking.

RQ2 How does commitment affect the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

Various scholars have highlighted and promulgated the validity of commitment as being fundamental to promoting a successful business relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Ford et al., 2013; Kaunonen, 2014), though again, very limited literature presented about its impact on Turkish SMEs. Therefore, this study will present a concrete argument as to the impact of commitment on Turkish SMEs relationship with their business partners.

RQ3 Why is communication/information sharing important to the sustainability of the relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners? Mohr and Spekman (1994); Conway and Swift (2000); and Voldnes (2014) suggested that one of the key factors responsible for improving the business relationship is quality of communication between business partners, including credibility of information sharing, timeliness, accuracy, and the extent to which the partners are actively and effectively engaged in exchanging information. A number of researchers postulated that, deep and broad communication between parties involved in business and their degree of knowledge exchange enhances fulfilment (Monczka et al., 1998; Dash et al., 2007; Voldnes, 2014). However, very limited discourse in extant literature highlighted its effect on Turkish SMEs. Therefore, this study will look to address this existing gap in literature.

RQ4 What is the influence of satisfaction on the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

Satisfaction within Turkish society is the primary driver for its companies fostering excellent cross-cultural business relationships with firms abroad. A number of studies conducted between 1970 and 1996 reveal satisfaction as being the most significant factor in measuring the quality of a relationship, as it eliminates conflict between the partners (Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Ganesan, 1994; and Geyskens et al., 1999). This study will explore and present empirical evidence to determine the significance of satisfaction in business cross-cultural relationships within Turkey.

RQ5 How does adaptation affect the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners?

A number of researchers proclaimed that, adaptation is the process that requires one of the parties in the transaction to modify and adapt its business behaviour to that of the business

partner in order enhance performance and foster a better business relationship (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999; Schmidt et al., 2007, Viio and Grönroos, 2016). However, extant theorists have presented very limited literature on Turkish SMEs. Therefore, this study will present empirical evidence on the impact of adaptation on Turkish SMEs behaviour with their business partners.

2.20 Summary of the chapter

The chapter has reviewed the factors influencing cross-cultural business relationships, including trust, commitment, satisfaction, communication/information sharing and adaptation. It has also critically reviewed the effects of each of these factors on cross-cultural business relationships between Turkish entities and their business partners. The chapter reviewed and evaluated Hofstede and other theorists' dimensions of culture. The next chapter of the research will focus on the methodology.

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The first chapter discussed the research aim and objectives in order to conduct the present research. The purpose of the current chapter is to explain the research philosophies, strategies, tools and methods of analysis in keeping with Saunders *et al'*s, (2016) research onion.

Academic research has been described by several authors as the systematic and methodological investigation of particular fields and research gaps, often resulting in an increase of working knowledge regarding an area of subject. (Collis & Hussey, 2014; M. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Creswell (2013) defines research design, which is essential in conducting research, as:

"A flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms, first, to strategies of inquiry, and second to methods for collecting empirical material" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; p.22).

The purpose of PhD research is to provide contribution to knowledge through an implementation of the most appropriate procedures in order to achieve the aims of the research (Oates, 2013). Therefore, in accordance with the previous definition, the current chapter will justify the choice and use of methods and tools used in this study and link them to the respective conclusions. The current chapter will discuss the following:

- The chosen research methodology and the criteria for the research design selection.

- Research philosophy and the philosophy selected for this research.

- Research approaches and data collection tools adapted in order to achieve the research aims.

- Research quality and the implication to the current study.

- Chosen sampling technique, data analysis and pilot study.

- Ethical approval and chapter summary.

3.2 Research Methodology

Although there are several scholars that have defined research, there is no agreed definition of research or what research constitutes (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). According to Sekran and Bougie (2010, p.5), research is defined as "simply the process of finding solutions to a problem after a thorough study and analysis of the situational factors". Further, methodology is defined as "a system of explicit rules and procedures that provides the foundations for conducting research and evaluating claims for knowledge" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008, p.12). That said, these definitions signify research methodology as a set of principles that are utilised to guide a study. The term methods and methodology are often used interchangeably to describe the same concept yet are different. Methods are described as actual tools, instruments and techniques utilised in collecting empirical evidence and analysis of data (Jennings, 2001). Meanwhile, methodology is the general approach to the research process, from the theoretical underpinning(s) to the collection and analysis of the data (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Consequently, this section considers the research methodology in order to explore the academic rigor, and validity of the research process.

3.3 Research Design Selection

Creswell (2013) identifies significant criteria for research design selection that begins with identifying the research problem; in exploratory research where there are no predetermined variables or outcomes to be examined then qualitative research is most appropriate, followed by the personal experience and skills of the researcher and finally the audience for whom the research is intended. The subsequent sections will discuss the adopted research process with the research 'onion' model developed by Saunders *et al*, (2016) used as the guiding framework for the current research process. The table below (table 3.1) provides a summary of the research design.

Table 3.1: A summary of the research design

Methodology	Researcher's position
Research Philosophy	Interpretivism
Research Approach	Inductive Approach
Research Design	Semi-structured Empirical
Research Methods	Qualitative
Data Collection	Primary data (Semi-structured interviews)
Data Analysis	Thematic Analysis
Sampling Techniques	Convenience Sampling

3.4 Research Onion
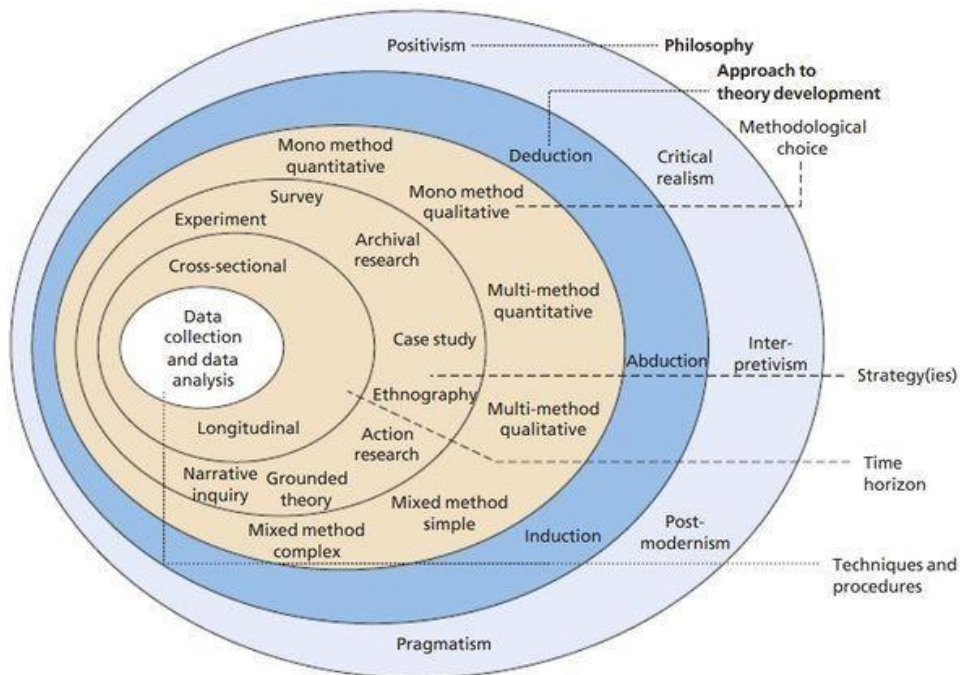
Figure 3.1: Onion-like 'layers' constituting the 'research onion' developed by Saunders *et al.* which demonstrates the order and sequence of the components of the research methodology (Source: Saunders *et al* (2016, p.124).

The research onion was first developed by Saunders *et al* (2003) and consists of six layers. The first layer includes various research philosophies, namely, positivism, critical realism, interpretivisim, post modernism, pragmatism and post modernism. The second layer, demonstrates the approach to theory development, including deduction, abduction and induction. The third layer explains methodological choices that can be implemented in research, which are primarily qualitative and quantitative. A researcher that uses either qualitative or quantitative methods separately is considered to be working from a mono method approach, however, the use of both qualitive and quantitative methods is known as 'multi –methods' and is often part of more complex or detailed research. The Fourth layer constitutes of strategies to adapt for research to solve research problems, which are experiments, surveys and archival research as well as case study ethnography and action research, grounded theory and narrative inquiry. The Fifth layer defines the time horizon in which data can be collected for research. The advantage of the research onion is to assist the researcher in selecting the most appropriate methods and strategies that will answer the research questions and objectives (Saunders *et al*. 2016).

3.5 Research Approach and Philosophy

This section provides comprehensive discussion regarding research philosophies, the chosen research philosophy, justifications and the research plan.

3.5.1. Defining Research Philosophy

The chosen research methodology reflects the researcher's view of the existing research problem and develops ways to solve it. Collin and Hussey (2013) described research philosophy as a framework that the research has been taken. In other words, research philosophy Is a way of analysing the data that was gathered from the research field.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson (2004) in their book have mentioned three ways to categorize research philosophy advantages for researchers, which are; firstly, it helps the researcher to answer basic research questions and clarifies some areas in the in order to analyse data. Secondly, it helps the researcher to

create the research design and allows him/her to evaluate the limitation of their research, and finally, it helps to develop new research design and gain knowledge for carrying out research project.

According to Easterby-Smith *et al*. (2004) research philosophy mainly includes three essential advantages:

- It simplifies the research process and makes the identification of subsequent tools and techniques easier
- It helps the researcher to understand and uncover and limitations
- It helps the researcher to create new research designs to suit the research aims and objectives

However, different researchers have different interpretations of research philosophies. On the one hand, for example, Neuman (2011) and Oates (2013) claimed that there are three research philosophies, which are positivism, interpretivism, and critical research. On the other hand, Saunders *et al*. (2016) adopt two research philosophies, which are positivist, and phenomenological that is referred to as interpretivism philosophy.

3.5.2. Ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions

Positivist and interpetivist philosophies have different assumption about research design (Collis and Hussey, 2009, 2013; Saunders *et al*., 2016). Ontological assumption is based on the nature of reality. This assumption consists of two types which are objectivist and subjectivist (Creswell, 2007; Collis and Hussey, 2009; Saunders *et al*., 2016). Objectivism considers reality as a social phenomenon that is different and independent from social actors (Saunders *et al* 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Subjectivism considers a reality related with social conduct from social actors' actions (Saunders *et al*., 2016). Positivist believe that there is only one reality and it is not related or influenced by external factors (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Hence, subjectivists believe that reality is connected with external factors; therefore, there are numerous realities (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

Epistemological assumption is about the grounds of knowledge. Positivists believe that knowledge can only be obtained as result of observation and measurement. (Collis and Hussey, 2009). They claim that researchers should consider themselves different from what they research. However, intepretivist believe that researcher should consider themselves part of what they research, and valid knowledge can be obtained subjectively (Pansiri, 2009).

Axiological assumptions consider values in knowledge (Creswell, 2007; Collis and Hussey, 2009; Saunders *et al*., 2016). Due to their objectivist adoption positivist researcher are isolated from values during research process. However, interpretivist interact and are not value free during the research process (Saunders et al., 2016).

The rhetorical assumptions are based on the language of research (Creswell, 2007; Collis and Hussey, 2009). The use of language in positivist and interpretivst approaches is different. A positivist researcher tends to be more objective in the way that they use formal language that and not voice their personal opinion. However, interpetivists use their personal opinion and are part of research therefore, they use informal and are subjective in their research.

Final assumption is methodological that represents research process (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Saunders *et al*., 2016). Positivists tend to use large samples and use hypothesis and consider causality while interpretivists consider small samples and try to understand what is happening (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

3.5.3. Positivism

Positivism is mainly used in natural science and scientific research. Oates (2013) claims that positivism is the oldest research philosophy and was developed 500 years ago. The basic concept of positivism is that reality that should be measurable and describable and that the world exists regardless of any individual (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009; Levy, 2006; Myers, 1997). Therefore, the methods used to measure reality need to be scientific, objective, and not based on a subjective evaluation or conclusions (Alder and Clark, 2014).

Collis and Hussey (2014) explains the process of positivistic philosophy that is based on forming a hypothesis and creating a theory. Analysis within positivism philosophy is carried out through reducing the whole into its simplest elements (Alder and Clark, 2014). The researcher's role is passive with consideration to quantifiable explanations that can be analysed by objectively used statistical procedures (Saunders et al., 2015). Positivist researchers adopt more scientific methods such as surveys and experiments because they determine facts measured in numbers (Sekran and Bougie, 2016).

The positivism within an ontological assumption is focused throughout a sound existence, comprising separate and observable events that allow generalisation among diverse concepts, while the epistemological assumption considers gained knowledge through the understanding of human senses and experimental investigation (Saunders et al., 2015). However, Bryman (2012) suggests that some procedures of measurement can be incorrect and artificial. Furthermore, these procedures may not facilitate the distinction between social and natural sciences (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Therefore, humans cannot be investigated without an assessment of their perceptions and behaviour (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Subsequently, qualitative interpretive approach developed as an appropriate alternative to positivism (Cohen et al., 2013).

3.5.4. Interprevtistm

The reality in an interprevitist approach is observed as socially constructed and subjective (Sekran and Bougie, 2016). The social phenomenon is analysed through subjective means. The research elements such as participants, contexts, situations and the researcher's understandings and judgements have a vital role in the analysis and interpretation of the collected data (Creswell, 2013). Researchers are likely to be subjective and personal whilst gathering data from participants. The methods used in interprivitst research are inductive methods, formerly known designs, deeply conducted investigations, small samples and studies that share similar setting (Creswell, 2013).

Interprevistim has emerged as an acknowledgment of the inadequacies of positivist research in order to meet the requirements of social scientists (Cohen et al., 2013). Various researchers use different terminology to describe interpretivism such as constructivism or naturalism (Saunders et al., 2015), phenomenology (Collis and Hussey, 2014), and social constructionism (EsterbySmith et al., 2012).

The concept that supports interpretivism is that reality is not objective meaning that it is socially constructed, and it is the people who give the meaning to this reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Interpretivists believe that the social world is rather complicated and cannot be understood through a group of generalisations. Cohen *et al* (2013) suggest that qualitative methods should be used to understand the social world because they enhance the understanding of the subject under study.

Unlike positivist assumption, the interpretivist researcher views and beliefs form an integral part of the study because he/she provides an interpretive understanding of a concept from his/her subjective perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Creswell, 2013). Generally, interpretivisim integrated qualitative research techniques that may involve observations from participants (Cohen et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the qualitative method used in interpretive approach could create uncertainty, which is marked for less interest with the need of generalisation (Saunders et al., 2015).

Table 3.2 Assumptions associated with the following research philosophies

	Positivism	*Interpretivism*
Human Interests	Irrelevant	Key drivers of science
Concepts	To measure them, operationalization is necessary	Stakeholder perspectives need to be incorporated
The Observer	Independent	A contributor to the observation

Explanations	Causality must be illustrated	Aspire to augment the general understanding of the circumstances
Generalization through	Statistical probability method	Theoretical abstraction
Research Progress through	Use of hypotheses and deductive approach	Enriched data collection from which ideas have been induced
Units of Analysis	Reduction to simple terms	The complexity of the 'entire' situations may be included
Sampling Required	Random selection of large numbers	Choosing small number of cases for particular reasons

Source: (Easterby-Smith *et al*., 2004, p.30

3.5.5. Comparison between positivism and interpretivism

Although both have significance in any research settings but there are clear differences dictated by various researchers (ref). Some researchers argue that interpretivist methods are most appropriate to study social science subjects or research whereas positivists argue that the laws of human behaviour integrate trends and correlations which can only be found through using quantitative data. The table below demonstrates the differences and characteristics of interpretivism and positivist research.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of positivist and interprevisit approaches.

	Positivist	Interpretivist
Ontology	Reality and researcher are separate. It is singular and can be known	Reality is socially constructed, subjective and reliant on the participant connected to the phenomenon

Epistemology	Findings are found only through research. Researcher is independent from that being researched.	Researcher is involved with what being researched and findings are created through research and writing
Methodology	Concerned with testing theories and verifying hypothesis Theories are strengthened or disapproved through testing relations of individual variables	Theories are developed from findings with focus on each social unit.
Research objectives	Associated with the prediction of behaviour	Understanding the phenomenon under study.
Researchers stance	Researcher acts as an observer from a distant.	Researcher forms an integral part of the researcher; phenomenon is interpreted by the researcher
The current study position	Not applicable	Applicable

Source: adapted from (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2015).

3.5.6. Current research philosophy

The research question and context are the focal elements that determine the choice of philosophy (Saunders et al., 2016; Oates, 2013). The current research aims to identify and investigate the factors that influence the development of cross-cultural business relationships in Turkish manufacturing SMEs with other countries. The questions of this research are concerned to ask 'How' questions instead of validating a hypothesis, which has the possibility to lead to further interpretation and explanation. Therefore, an interpretivist approach is selected for this study. This approach was selected for this study due to the research assumption, which is in accordance with an ontological perspective that is subjective and an epistemological perspective that is interactive. The justification is to establish reality according to the experiences of the participants in their social setting. Unlike the positivist approach, interpretivist avoids firm structural

framework and allows the researcher to adopt measures to help to understand the phenomenon. The interpretivist research is more consistent in capturing human experiences and views in a more detailed manner because it considers the meaning and understandings of what makes reality of the data subjects and it does not provide misleading results that is likely to be found in using a single measurement or analysing the relations quantitatively (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Rakic and Chambers, 2011; Black, 2006; Carson, Gilmore and Gronhaug, 2001). This supports the aim of this research which is concerned with capturing the views of the participants and their experience in a comprehensible way.

There are two fundamental and inter-related questions that the interpretivist approach is able to answer: 1) what are the relationships between the one who knows and the object that is known, 2) what are the characteristics of reality? (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105). Applying these two questions into the current study context, provides the justification concerning the suitability and validity of the interpretivist approach for this research. Hence, the current study aims to capture Turkish managers and owners of SMEs perceptions it becomes important to establish a personal interaction with the research participants in order to understand the social reality needed to deliver new knowledge. According to Thomas *et al* (2014) interpretivist approach is most valuable for understanding how and why new knowledge is developed and applied. This aligns with the epistemological assumption and it embodies the exploratory nature of this research which is investigating the factors that influence cross-culture relationship. The researcher needs to position himself with what was being researched because reality is socially constructed which is in line with ontological assumption (Bryman and Bell, 2015). According to the position of this research discussed above, both the ontological and epistemological arguments are in line with the assumptions related to interpretivisim (Saunders et al., 2016; Collis and Hussey, 2014; Easterby-Smith, 2012).

3.5.7 Addressing Research Bias

A perpetual and oft cited limitation of the interpretivist paradigm is the fact that it tends to overlook the fact that researchers can exercise objectivity and free will (Oates, 2013). Bias is said to be an inherent part of interpretivist study,

proponents of this paradigm argue that they make no claims of objectivity, thus bias cannot be 'addressed' (Oates, 2013).   That said, bias can be addressed and acknowledged and subsequently controlled.   As such, I am aware that as a business person with interests in exports, I will have to suspend what I believe to be 'correct' and my own interpretations of culture. To ensure that the data is not in any way embedded with bias, I will enlist the assistance of a fellow researcher to code the data in order to confirm that the observations I make are not biased in any way. Furthermore, I am aware that being Turkish further increases bias as the focus of the research is on Turkey. Peer reviews of the data will therefore be integral to ensuring that I assess the opinions of my countrymen without any bias- positive or negative. The data will also be checked for alternative explanations during interrogation to ensure that my own bias is not in any way reflected.

3.6 Research approaches

The previous section has established the rationale for adopting interpretivist as most suitable philosophy that will serve the aim of this research. The current section will briefly discuss the research approaches and provides the justification for the chosen approach for this study. Maxwell (2012) posits that research approach helps the researcher to understand the nature of the research problem. There are two research approaches that can be adopted when conducting research (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Collis and Hussey, 2013). An inductive approach is concerned with establishing a theory from certain observations and/findings (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman, 2015). While, a deductive approach is about moving from the general theory to observation or findings (Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013). The inductive approach is described as a systematic technique for analysing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives (Thomas, 2003). The table below (table 4.3) demonstrates the main characteristics of the inductive and deductive approaches.

Figure 3.2 Deductive and inductive approach of research

Deductive approach	Inductive approach
Develop theory	Develop theory
↓	↑
Formulate Hypotheses	Formulate relationships
↓	↑
Collect and analyse data	Analyse patterns and themes
↓	↑
Accept/ reject hypotheses	Observe Phenomena
↓	
Revision of Theory	
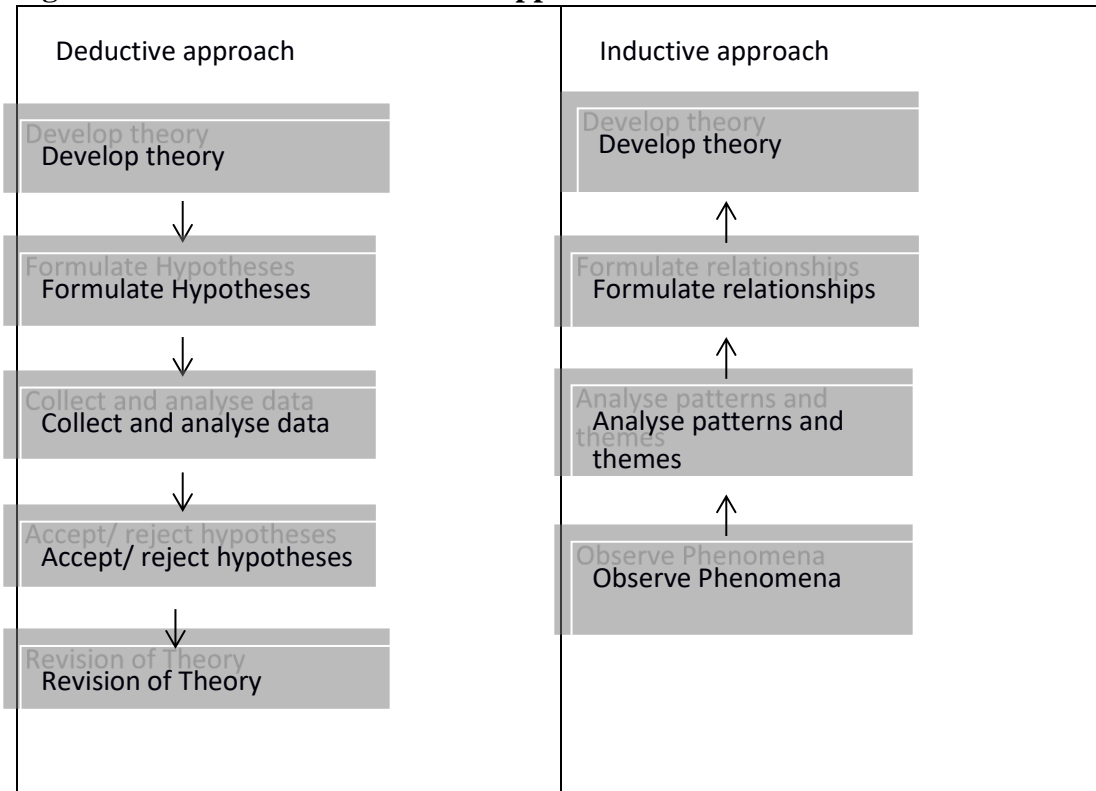
Source: adapted from Bryman (2015; p. 24).

3.6.1. Justification for choosing inductive research approach

According to Myers (2013) both approaches can be used in a qualitative research. It is important to state that the research started with a deductive approach which is reflected in the literature review from which the themes developed (Bryman, 2015). Deductive is used to ascertain specific perceptions from the literature review about the international business relationship and the factors that impact the relationship. Nonetheless, the literature review was only used as a guide to establish the themes. That said, the current research adopted the inductive approach, because of the social nature of this research that concentrates on the feelings and perceptions of humans. The inductive approach assists the researcher to establish the meanings humans place on events and experiences (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, an inductive approach allows the researcher to modify the research structure during the research process. Furthermore, this approach permits researchers to work with qualitative data collected by various methods (Easterby-smith, 2012). An inductive approach is adopted to collect data from Turkish SMEs managers and business owners about how international business

development. Table (3.5) shows the key differences between deductive and inductive approach and the current research selected approach.

Table 3.4. The Major Differences between Deductive and Inductive Approaches

Deductive Approaches	Inductive Approaches	Current research
Scientific	Based around understanding humans and social events	The current research explores the factors that influence the development of cross-cultural business relationships. It does not aim to test Hofstede cultural dimension theory or Schwartz model. In effect the research is using both theories as a guide to explore the factors and develop new theory.
Start from data to theory	Deep understanding of research context	As the aim of this research is to explore the factors that influence cross-cultural business relationships among Turkish SMEs, a deeper and better understanding of the business owners and managers perception of the factors and the effect they have on their business relationship will emerge.
Try to understand correlation between variables and possible reasons for this	Collection of qualitative data	Semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to amend and add more questions according to the conversation and elicit further details.
Strict protocols	Greater flexibility, allowing researchers to change and amend research focus continuously	Qualitative data was collected.
Specific sample sizes required, in order for results to be considered valid.	Researchers have a greater degree of freedom when developing sample pools. It is possible to conduct several rounds and phases of research with time being the only constraint.	The researcher was very much part of the process, interacting with the interviewees during the data collection phase.

| Relies heavily on generalizations as objectivity remains at the heart of deductive approaches | Generalizations are not accepted as focus is on 'interpretation' and understanding data beyond face value | Generalizations were limited to theory and data was thoroughly interrogated to avoid any possible generalizations. |

Source: Saunders *et al*. (2016)

3.7 Research Methodology (quantitative and qualitative)

According to Saunders et al (2016), research methodology consists of the procedures and techniques that can be used to during the systematic process of enquiry and discovery of knowledge. In a similar vein, qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as two distinct categories (Newman and Benz, 1998). However, they should be considered as equally valid but two distinct ends of one continuum. That said, Creswell (2013) introduces three approaches to conduct a research:

- Quantitative;

- Qualitative;

- Mixed methods.

Generally, most research studies tend to favour the use of one approach, either quantitative than qualitative (Creswell, 2013). According to Newman and Benz's however, this does not always have to be the case as it is possible to combine both approaches, in what has come to referred to as a mixed methods approach.

Quantitative research starts with a hypothesis or a theory that will validate and test a correlation between variables (Creswell, 2013). The analysis of the data collected in quantitative research is carried out through statistical techniques to test the accuracy of the hypotheses and findings (Creswell, 2013; Newman and Benz, 1998). This research approach tends to value data quantification and statistical analysis tools (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, quantitative researchers tend to generalise their conclusions through measures that deliver quantified data (Bell, 2010). In quantitative research, researchers are very much at the mercy of the techniques and models they select when it comes to running statistical

techniques and tests. Often the quality of the data produced rests on the suitability and applicability of tests selected (Bryman, 2012).

On the contrary, qualitative approach focuses on words and meaning rather than quantification in data collection or analysis (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, the strengths of qualitative research mentioned in Corbin and Strauss (2014) relate to the fact that they ascertain deeper fundamental meanings and explanation of the concept. Qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with the understanding research contexts and they seek insight rather than perform statistical analyses. The qualitative researcher approaches field study without prior categories of analysis, which contributes to openness, depth and level of detail in qualitative research (Patton, 2002).

According to Bryman (1984, p. 77) qualitative research is described as a "more fluid and flexible" form of research compared to quantitative research, because it discovers new findings that may entice the researcher to flex their research plan. However, the main criticism of this approach is the analysis of words because it is believed that they do not deliver comprehensive information about data analysis (Oates, 2013). Nonetheless, Newman and Benz (1998) emphasize that qualitative research consistently provides rigorous foundation strategies and starting points that followed by quantitative research.

Creswell (2013) outlines the data collection techniques that can be used in qualitative research which include in-depth-interviews, focus groups, and observations from the study field. Observation is very important when it comes to observing natural behaviours. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to understand human behaviour through interaction and their experience and perceptions about research topic. Focus groups are also beneficial to understanding and observing group behaviours and broad overviews (Thomas, 2003). Qualitative methods also help to analyse intangible factors such as religion and culture in a social context in a qualitative research (Sofaer, 2002). Furthermore, in his book, Myers (2013) suggests that qualitative research can either be positivist, interpretivist or critical, nonetheless, it mainly depends on the researcher's philosophical assumption (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.3 Underlying philosophical assumption

Qualitative research

Guides/influences

Positivist   Interpretive   Critical
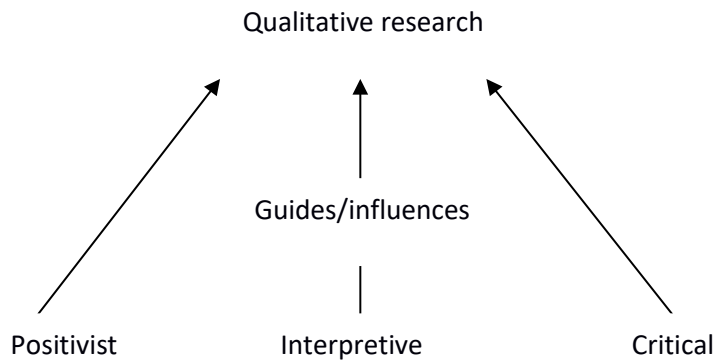
Underpinning epistemology

Source: adapted from Myers (2013)

A researcher may choose to combine both qualitative and quantitative techniques in a single research (Creswell, 2013). The mixed methods technique which integrates qualitative and quantitative data may provide a comprehensive and coherent understanding of the research problem than a single approach. However, Bryman (1984) suggests that adopting multiple approaches in research may not always be appropriate and contrary to popular belief, he suggests that doing so is not always the better option, it largely depends on the aims and objectives for any research. Preferably, adopting a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques should offer the most accurate answer for research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Triangulation, which means combining two or more methodologies in a single research, can be carried out through the different stages such as method, strategy, time, space, investigator and theoretical (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Oates, 2013). Table 3.6 illustrates a summary of the fundamental differences of both approaches that is adapted from Bryman (2012, p.36). Furthermore, table 3.6, highlights the advantages and disadvantages for quantitative and qualitative methods. With this in mind, the main difference between qualitative and quantitative methods their questions types and their objectives, data collection methods research designs are highlighted within the context of the current study (see table 3.7)

Table 3.5. The main advantages and disadvantages of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Quantitative	Used to test large sample, information on many characteristics and variables.	Focus tends towards representativeness
Qualitative	In-depth understanding of a particular subject.	Difficulty in generalising to a larger population
Mixed methods	Ability to produce quantitative and qualitative research strengths	It can be difficult for a researcher to learn about multiple methods and approaches and understand how to mix them appropriately.
Adopted methodology	In-depth study of the subject under investigation with the aid of semi-structured interview.	Avoiding the disadvantages of qualitative method by following a systematic approach during interviews

Source: adapted from (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Table 3.6 Differences in quantitative and qualitative methods

	Qualitative	Quantitative
General Framework	Looks to explore a phenomenon More flexible instruments, eliciting is of iterative style and categorization of responses to questions Semi-structured methods are employed e.g. participant observations, focus groups and in-depth interviews	Focused on confirming hypotheses about a phenomenon Rigid instruments that are used to elicit and categorize questions' responses Highly structured techniques e.g. structured observation, surveys and questionnaires
Question Format	Open ended	Close ended
Data Format	Textual (gained from field notes, videotapes and audiotapes)	Numerical (gained by allocation of numerical values to the responses)
Analytical Objectives	Variation description Relationships are explained and described Description of individual experiences Group norms are described	Variation is quantified Causal relationships prediction Describing the features of a population
Study Design Flexibility	Flexible aspects of the study (for instance, semantics, exclusion, addition of specific interview questions)	Stable study design; from beginning to end

3.7.1. Justification for the chosen qualitative research method

For the purpose of the current study, a qualitative inductive approach is selected throughout the research process because the objectives of the research concentrate on developing detailed meaning of the phenomenon under study. The underlying epistemological position and ontological assumption of this thesis have guided the decision to select this approach. Epistemologically, the researcher will be involved with the participants being interviewed, whilst ontologically, reality is socially constructed and thus has to emerge from the experiences and insights of human participants. These two factors remain a major driving force behind the selection of qualitative research. A qualitative research technique was therefore utilised as a probe to assist the researcher interact with Turkish SMEs owners and managers through conducting in-depth interviews which will help to explore the factors that may influence the development of cross-cultural business relationships. According to Creswell (2013) the qualitative approach was adopted in order to help interpret and describe the participant's experience. Carson (2006) outlined three reasons as to why the qualitative methods are the most suitable for marketing studies. They are as follows:

- A qualitative methodology investigates the phenomenon without the need for a researcher to have predetermined opinions;
- In order to understand a specific phenomenon, a qualitative methodology focuses on the 'how' and 'why' questions and provide thorough answers;
- A qualitative methodology concentrates on obtaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

In addition, Maxwell (2012) argues that qualitative approach has the ability to capitalise on the principle strengths through relying mainly on the information provided by the participants without any predetermined opinions also understand the research context and how it influences the participants, in this case Turkish SMEs. Furthermore, as the research has an analytical nature that presents the why and how certain factors influence cross-cultural business relationships and the trajectory of their development. It also assists the researcher to understand the sequence of events and actions. In consideration of the justification discussed

above, the use of qualitative research methodology is believed the most suitable in evaluating and producing valid data for the current study.

3.7.2. Research method

Collis and Hussey (2013) defined research methods as the principles of data collection and analysis. This section presents the research methods used in this research. There are multiple ways to collect data. The quantitative methodology helps to identify and measure variables in research phenomena. On the contrary, qualitative methods focus on establishing subjective meanings and perceptions about research phenomena, (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Saunders et al. (2016) claimed that Primary data can be collected in interviews, focus groups, observations, and questionnaires. However, secondary data is collected from existing literature (Collis and Hussey, 2013). This study will collect both primary and secondary data.

To better understand the way in which cross-cultural business relationships develop within Turkish SMEs, it was necessary to collect data directly from this context. Various data collection methods are used in a qualitative research. It is however important to acknowledge to the fact that each one of these methods has advantages and disadvantages, and this study's approach focuses on mitigating the weaknesses are exemplified in Table 4.5

3.8 Data Collection Method

This section provides an insight into sampling and data collection techniques.

3.8.1. Semi –Structured interviews

Amaratunga & Baldry (2002 p.18) describe interviews as that "*whose purpose is to collate descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee following an interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena*".

Saunders et al. (2016) define interviews as being extremely beneficial in eliciting data from a sample of interviewees. In addition, Easterby-Smith et al., (2004) claim that interviews are both the easiest and most preferred methods that can be used in order to elicit detailed and accurate data.

Interviews can be of either structured or semi-structured format. Sekaran (2003) claims that structured interviews are beneficial in eliciting direct data and allows researchers to gather specific data from or within a particular topic. Saunders et al. (2016) also highlight the benefits of utilising a structured interview style when developing and administering questionnaires.

In contrast, when using semi structured interviews researchers can develop a setting wherein questions are both clear and easily understood by interviewees, as well as allow for them [the interviewees] to speak freely and provide detail when necessary, allowing for the researcher to be able to garner rich and detailed insights into the research domain. In addition, semi-structured interviews encapsulate a 'natural flow' of conversation not found in more rigid or structured interview formats, allowing for ease of communication and more relaxed interview participants.

The benefits of using interviews are as follows:

1. They enhance certainty and validity of data collected from the research field. Direct interaction between interviewer and respondent allows for the research concept to be explained clearly and for information to be gathered directly from its source [the interviewee] diminishing grounds for misunderstanding or contextual confusion. (Oppenheim, 1992).

2. Interviews, and in particular face-to-face interviews, allow for researchers to be able to read non-verbal signs and intangible communication such as body language and attitude shifts; this essentially means that researchers are provided with an extra dimension of communication from which insight and understanding can be developed. Such indirect communication also allows researchers the luxury of knowing when to perhaps 'push' the interviewee or allow said interviewee(s) to express themselves naturally. As the researcher can study the interview participants face-to-face, interviews provide a contextual setting and intimacy of communication

that other data collection methods cannot and do not provide. (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

3.8.2. Justification for Choosing Semi-Structured Interviews

Using semi-structured interviews as part of a qualitative research assignment is extremely beneficial for researchers as they [semi-structured interviews] allow for the investigation of individual experiences relevant to the research topic and/or domain, providing deep and rich insights that other data elicitation and collection methods do not provide (Bernard, 2011). In that sense, semi-structured interviews provide opportunities to understand respondents' feelings and perceptions directly.

Semi-structured interviews offer a host of advantages, including the fact that questions can be developed and prepared ahead of time, thus ensuring that the interviewer/researcher appears confident, and more importantly, competent. Participants tend to respond well and provide more detailed information when the researcher is perceived to be competent (Oates, 2006; Myers, 2008). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow participants the freedom to express themselves on their own terms, allowing for comprehensive and reliable data to be gathered. It is also prudent to note that this particular interview method promotes two-way communication, meaning that participants can also ask the researcher(s) themselves questions of their own and as such, can function as an extension tool. Semi-structured interviews also allow individuals to feel more comfortable in discussing more sensitive issues, as well as provide a rich research contextual setting that allows for not only answers to be collected, but the reasoning behind said answers to be understood and analysed (Oates, 2006; Myers, 2008).

The developed questions as part of the semi-structured interviews as follows:

1. Based on your experience, how would you define cross-cultural BRD?

2. So, in your opinion, how many stages are there in the BRD? What are they?

3. How can you describe each stage? What are the objectives of each stage?

4. What are the factors that you consider important for the BRD in each stage?

5. How do you communicate through BRD? (Formal/ informal, language, media 'phone, fax, social media')

6. What makes the relationship successful at each stage? Can you give an example?

7. What makes the relationship unsuccessful at each stage? Can you give an example?

8. In your experience, what makes it fail? (you won't be able to move to the next stage)

9. Overall, what is the role and importance of culture in the BRD process? Why? How? Can you give an example?

10. Overall, what are the foreign language competences in the BRD process? Why? How?

    Can you give an example?

11. Which countries do you like doing business with it? Why?

12. Which countries do you dislike doing business with it? Why

The table 3.7 below illustrates how the researcher can benefit from the semi-structured interviews:

Feature	Benefit
Flexibility	When eliciting information from the interviewee, it is possible to modify questions to fit their understanding, if necessary. For example, they may not comprehend a question, and at this point the interviewer can interject and clarify.
Certainty	During the interview process, direct communication with researcher and respondent allow for research aims and objectives to be clearly described. The interviewees are therefore able to have a clear grasp of what is required of them and what is not.

Complexity	In situations where complexities arise or gaps in understanding and knowledge become apparent, the interview is afforded with the ability to divert questions which allow for better outcomes. Interviews also allow for non-verbal cues (facial expressions, body language) to be analysed and gauge responses when it is not possible to directly ask questions regarding certain issues. a
Control	Interviewers are able to exert a considerable degree of control over the conversation and probe when necessary.
Greater Rate Response	Interviews allow for greater cooperation between interviewee and the interviewer, ultimately allowing for richer data. During and after the interview process, it also becomes possible to collect feedback from the respondents as well as reassure them that their opinions, whilst also guaranteeing confidentiality.
Other Benefits	Semi-structured interviews also allow for more detailed information to be collected as the researcher has more control during the interview process. Unlike questionnaires which are a solitary activity, interviews allow respondents with an opportunity to clarify any concerns and misunderstandings. This also allows for the purpose of the research to be clearly communicate to the participants, again a provision that is not afforded when using other survey techniques such as questionnaires.

3.9 Research Sample

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals from within a well-defined population to estimate characteristics of the entire population (Ahuja, 2011). Ensuring suitable sampling methods is crucial to any piece research; the sample represent the data source for a study and directly shape the outputs and conclusions of a piece of research. When selecting a sampling method, major considerations have to be granted to factors such as response rates and data accuracy. There are two sampling techniques available to qualitative researchers, namely probability and non-probability sampling methods. Non- probability sampling includes: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. It includes non- random selection of elements (Bryman, 2015). Participants within a sample group are selected based on the extent to which they fulfil certain criteria. On the contrary, probability sampling tends to be randomized to ensure that all members are afforded an opportunity to participate within a piece of research. As far as the current study is concerned, two sampling methods were adopted.

Given that the research focuses on the opinions of individuals from a specific country and business sector, non-probability sampling was regarded as being the most suitable sampling methods. As part of non-probability sampling, *convenience sampling* was adopted as part of the data collection process. In addition to its ability to pin-point specific individuals, this technique was also chosen due to its overall simplicity, cost-effectiveness as well as ease of implementation (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

In light of this, Saunders et.al. (2016) mention five categories for non-probability sampling which are quota, purposive, snowball, self-selection and convenience. Flick (2015) claimed that convenience sampling techniques main advantages relate to overall usefulness and differentiation between different phoneme.

Table 3.8 Philosophical debates for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of research

Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approach – A Philosophical Debate	
Research Approaches	*Philosophical Debates*
Qualitative Approach	Four paradigms were identified by Guba and Lincoln (1994) which compete in qualitative research; i.e. critical theory, positivism, post-positivism and constructivism. Nevertheless, interpretive and critical paradigms, as asserted by other scholars (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, and McNabb, 2008), tend to best complement qualitative approaches. this is due to their focus on obtaining insights and understanding as opposed to quantifying and testing a phenomenon. A complete discussion has been carried out by analysing these debates in detail (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).
Quantitative Approach	A quantitative approach is found to have been associated with naturalist and positivist philosophies (Steen and Roberts, 2011; Polit and Beck, 2008). Moreover, other philosophical stances have also been added by Skoldberg (2009) i.e. social constructionism, positivism and critical realism. All of which are said to support and complement the use of a more statistically inclined approach.
Mixed Methods	The root of mixed methods is said to be in pragmatism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Denscombe, 2007), however the opposite is asserted by Barret (2010) and states that the theoretical bases of this method is critical realism. This method is said to be flexible and best used to obtain more detailed insights into a phenomenon. Mixed methods have gained in popularity in disciplines such as politics to better understand voter behaviour. Simply quantifying votes is not enough when it comes to understanding voter motivations, for example. Political scientists have thus advocated for the use of mixed methods when it comes to understanding decision making- it is not enough to know that an 'x' number of people voted for a certain party. It is said to be more effective to

	combine qualitative methods to understand what drives different demographic groups to vote (Barret, 2010).
Qualitative versus Quantitative Approach	The debates have been ongoing when it comes to understanding which of the philosophies best compliments a single research approach (for instance for mixed methods – critical realism against pragmatism); to find out if a specific philosophy is suitable for quantitative or qualitative approach (for instance positivism for quantitative vis-àvis qualitative).

3.9.1. Participant Selection

The process of participant selection was kicked-off by sending letters to companies, requesting the participation of their staff as well as informing them the purpose of the intended study (See Appendix 1). The letter of consent asked interviewees about their willingness to participate and requested confirmation via signature. Non-probability sampling methods dictated that specific business be targeted, these were selected from those companies that were listed in the independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association system, containing 100 companies who engaged in cross-border trading and business.   Nearly all these companies were contacted to ensure a high response rate. Those who were willing to partake in the research were given my contact details immediately to ensure that they were able to get in touch should they have to cancel or withdraw from the research. To further ensure participation, interviews were held at respondents' offices, thereby limiting any inconvenience on the part of the participants.

3.10 Ethical consideration

According to Yin (2014) research which requires the involvement of human participants requires prior approval from the institutional review board (IRB). Furthermore, in line with the rules and regulations of the University of Salford, the current research is considered as falling within the scope of the research governance and ethics committee (REGEC). Therefore, the researcher applied for ethical approval (See Appendix 1 for ethical approval prior to conducting the field study. In order to obtain the correct information, the researcher contacted Turkey's Largest Association for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (the Musiad industries and businessman association system). All participants were provided with an information letter explaining the purpose of the research and notifying them of every right they possess. They were also given consent forms (See Appendix 2 for consent forms) to read and sign, that clearly indicate their understanding of their rights as participants. The respondents were assured that their identity and personal responses will be completely anonymous in the write-up procedure and treated with high confidentiality. Interviewing often includes the use of audio taping data that is then transcribed (Bryman, 2015). Bryaman further posited that this technique may increase the construct validity of the research and also has ethical implications. All documentation and audio materials were securely stored within the University of Salford in order to protect data that were provided by respondents.

Electronic materials were stored within the researcher's file store and written materials were stored in secure filing cabinets. All recorded interviews were in the Turkish language, and it was the researcher who translated as Turkish is his native language.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gap in literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish manufacturing SMEs. This chapter presents the findings of the empirical investigation and provides an in-depth analysis of the key themes that emerged from the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 25 participants from the Turkish SME sector.

In light of this, key themes will be analysed within the frame of the three interview topics described in the methodology chapter and detailed within the tables:

• Participants' definition of BRD

• Participants' views on the stages of BRD

• Participants' views on the role of cultural factors in BRD

In the interviews, several elements emerged as key themes from respondents' answers which are:

- Trust
- Commitment
- Communication
- Satisfaction
- Adaptation
- Culture

4.2 Summary of Analysis of Findings from the Respondent

Table (4.1) below presents a short analysis of each respondent's interview responses

Table-1

Q.1	Based on your experience, how would you define cross-cultural BR? How, and why can you elaborate this.
Respondents	**Summary**
1-	Bringing money to our country, **why?** when you set a business relationship with your business partners its allow you to set a relationship long term and long-time business with this as a result of this relationship your company get more orders and more money with this we can increase our company, also when you start business with someone you learn many things to use and increase your ability to company to adapt different markets. Long term, not one-off business opportunities. Broadening the horizon brings opportunities for our company.
2-	Bringing money to the country, representing the country, and forming relationships with people from different countries. **Can u explain more please**? when you start and get customer orders you satisfy them with their first trial order after when they are satisfied with your product and service, they increase their order.
3-	Doing business with non-Turkish companies, **How**? Our side business partner demands, and their culture is always different so for that reason we try to accomplish our commitment and satisfy them. For to that we need to communicate with them well and open. Because we aim long-term, in doing business with them we need to gain their trust. It's all based on trust because all relationships are based on trust and without trust, you cannot build anything.
4-	Developing business with another country; **How?** Domestic market is not always fulfilling your demands, for that reason we need to seek new business partners to find alternative partners to increase business opportunities and this alternative business markets contribute to our country's economy.

5-	Trust-based relationships with non-Turkish companies with written agreement. **Could you elaborate this?** To set a business relationship you need to gain your business partner trust to gain trust allows you to set a business with Turkish people, to get trust it depends your make them satisfy with their requirements and demands. also, you need to adapt yourself to their requirements and business styles to make them happy.
6-	The interaction of two people in two different countries, based on trust. How? Business relationship is based of two-person companies
7-	A trust-based relationship with a partner to do business with non-Turkish people and bring money to our country. Can u explain this more please? When you gain your customer trust their order and satisfy to them you establish business relationship with them.
8-	Selling products to other countries to bring money to our country.
9-	Economic activity between companies outside Turkey to make our country's economy better.
10-	Doing business to earn money for our country and our company. Why? Business main aim is making money to make your company running also in long term it contributes your economy.
11-	To sell our product abroad and represent our country very well, based on bilateral relations.
12-	To make long-term business deals with customers that make our country's economy better. **How?** long term agreements mean when customer is happy they want to make a greet with us to buy products with their requirements and do not want to sell products other places,
13-	Contribution to our country's brand image and economy. **Can u give more information**? When you sell products all around the world people trust your country products, that means your country image and in the eyes, people believe your country business more respectful and trustable.
14-	To sell Turkish products all around to world. We sell to 134 countries in the world, which makes me happy because we are representing our country in all of these countries.
15-	A relationship with a business partner is like a marriage. **Can you have explained please?**

	When you commit to do long term business with some companies it makes you like a marriage on paper agreement, also after investing committing and gaining their trust and adaptation your company to their demands
16-	To start business with another nation, long term, to make money. Can you elaborate? Doing business with other nations helps to enter a new market where you can sell your product and your company can grow.
17-	To sell our product outside and represent our country's brand image. How? Our country has some good reputation in some places to people believe Turkish product quality have their trust and satisfy their demands. fort that reason we committed to keep quality and our country image.
18-	To bring money to our country from outside. Establishing business relationship with someone allow us to get more money and make our company more profit and growth.
19-	To bring money to our country. **Why?** Build business relationship it requires more effort and commitment after making them satisfied to get customer trust after gaining the trust.
20-	Business with other nations has to be done 'the proper way'. Proper means when you do business with non-Turkish companies, you need to make an agreement and write down every detail in the cross-cultural business relationship.
21-	It allows the company to grow and to spread their brand worldwide. How When u increase your sales you'll make more money its allows your to make your brand and product more recognised in global market that means people going to trust your company more and chose.
22-	To find new markets and business partners for our company's growth. Can you explain more?
23-	Based on win-win principles; companies sell their product in other nations. Like can u explain more please? When u do business if you happy with customer order and business you can make more money and satisfy
24-	A way to sell Turkish products everywhere across the globe. How? When you sell your products relationship is the way a find a customer and market to sell this new markets and customer

25-	Making friendships for business to make money for our country and company. **How ?** I see on business people like my partner and beyond that a want to be friends with them to be friend with somebody
	Summary of Table 1 • Turkish business people view business relationships on a national level. From their perspective, business relationships directly benefit their country's economy. From this it could further be gleaned that when 'doing' business, the stakeholders very much view themselves as representatives of their culture and Turkey itself. As ambassadors/representatives, the perceptions of their country appear to take precedence before their business. This is not to suggest that the participants care more about their country than profits- instead it could be inferred that they feel perceptions of a country very much dictate the likelihood of conducting transactions with businesses situated there. Moreover, the benefit of business relationships on a personal level was not mentioned at all. These can be linked with Hofstede study which show Turkish people are collectivistic. The collectivist nature of Turks emerges as they view their success to be deeply intertwined with that of their country. As such, this could mean that they the individual business relationship is not neglected, rather it is seen as a sub-set of the more important country/national level relationship. • Participants, above all, think of representing their country and contributing to their country's brand image. Business relations therefore start at the 'top'- nations have to firstly be acquainted- the quality of this meeting goes on to define long-term business relations. The participants very much appear to be of the belief that once they establish a good national relationship and showcase their culture- partners will likely engage in long term business with them. it further emerges that the participants primary aim is to impart a good impression of Turkey and Turkish culture and this for them, sets a precedence of all future relations.

- Another factor mentioned is trust and agreement. Trust is the key element for doing business, even in domestic business activities. However, trust is considered particularly important in cross-cultural business relationships as there can be many differences between companies. Once again, trust is interlinked with perceptions of Turkey and participants appear to be deeply concerned with the perceptions of their country. Participants mentioned another factor, that business relationships within a single country do not involve much uncertainty because of financial credit checks or gathering information about the company willing to do business.

- It is at this point interesting to note that some participants may not have explicitly understood the questions, in hindsight. The question sought to investigate the definitions of a cross-culture relationship- much in keeping with the gaps identified within the literature. That said however it appears that the respondents may have misunderstood as they provided answers as to the *importance* of such a relationship, and the factors that strengthened such relationships. This is potentially exemplified by Participant 24, the statements of whom suggest that cross-cultural business relationships are primarily seen as a means to an end- the end being the distribution of Turkish products into a new market.

- One of the more interesting analogies was provided by a participant who likened a cross-cultural relationship to a marriage. This is very interesting as the participant acknowledged the importance of meeting demands and accommodating partners as a means of sustaining such a relationship- a cross cultural business relationship according to the participant is one which is built on trust. Trust represents the foundation of such a relationship.

Table -2

Q.2 So, in your opinion, how many stages are there in BRD? What are they?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Introduction, Evaluation, Continuity
2-	Start, Develop, Continue
3-	Start: get to know customers' capacity and ability Development: we visit the customer in their own country and develop a close relationship with them, meet their family, etc. Continuity: to do business on a regular basis
4-	Start Continue
5-	Start, Develop, Continue
6-	Start, Develop, Continue We do not want to finish our relationship with our business partner. When you finish your business with an existing customer, you need to seek another then another; it is pointless and time consuming.
7-	Agreement based, Friendship based
8-	Start, Develop, Continue
9-	Start, Develop, Continue
10-	Start, Develop, Continue
11-	Start, Develop, Continue
12-	Search, Introduce, Start, Continue
13-	Start, Develop, Continue
14-	Start, Develop, Continue
15-	Contact, Develop, Continue
16-	Start, Develop, Continue
17-	Start, Develop, Continue
18-	Start, Develop, Continue

19-	Start, Develop, Continue
20-	Search, Introduce, Eliminate, Continue
21-	Start, Develop, Continue
22-	Start, Develop, Continue
23-	Start, Develop, Continue
24-	Start, Develop, Continue
25-	Start, Develop, Continue
	Summary of Table 2 • The development of business relationships is perceived by most Turkish business people in three stages. • Their reasoning for this emerges from the nuances of Turkish culture. The culture is characterised by liner thinking- if examined further, this could be due to the underpinning religion of Turkey and how deeply this pervades society, despite Turkey being a secular country. Jong et al., (2018) note that Abrahamic cultures and religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) tend to be linear in nature- where there is a distinct beginning i.e. creation and a distinct end i.e. death, return to a creator Whilst the participants at this stage make no reference to religion, their views of the linear nature of business relationships suggests that culture appears to have shaped this view. • Interestingly, the linear nature of their thinking does not necessarily feature when it comes to duration- business is viewed as a long-term interaction and commitment and does not simply end. They do not accept any termination in business because, for them, business is a sustainable activity between two companies. This means that they only do business long term. Short term is only a one-off transaction, which does not create a relationship between business people. • Some of the participants see business relationships as an agreement based on friendship. • Another reason why there is no termination process is that business

	people recognise uncertainty. They thus see value in maintaining these relationships and based on at least one participant, a business relationship is viewed as an investment. One which can be called upon in times of ambiguity- a good experience may make the difference in a customer that returns and one that does not. • A small number of participants see business relationships on four levels: search, introduce, eliminate and continue; this perspective emphasises the importance of business partner selection.

Table-3

Q.3	**How would you describe each stage? What are the objectives of each stage? How? also can you elaborate more?**
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Introduction: Represents our product Evaluation: considers the potential partner's seriousness Continue: start business with a small order
2-	Start: try to contact a partner and evaluate whether he is serious Develop: start with some orders and build up to more and more Continue: set up the business relationship on track and continue according to regulations

3-	Start: to sell the product
	Develop: to develop and improve the relationship with the customer
	Continue: to keep working with customers without any problems
4-	Start: customer contacts us via trade fair or recommendation from someone else; aim to identify the customer very well.
	Develop: start business and develop on a regular basis
	Continue: make and sustain existing relationship with business partner.
5-	Start: customer comes and explains his or her demands.
	Develop: analyse customer and earn his or her long-term commitment.
	Continue: send orders and items as in agreement.
6-	Start: get to know customer and introductions.
	Develop: see opportunities in the target countries' markets.
	Continue: keep business in a stable position
7-	Agreement: European countries come, explain their demands, and make an agreement on paper.
	Friendship-based: mainly Arab countries come, on recommendation, and place orders for some products. Then, if business is going well, they trust us and do not go anywhere else to buy products
8-	Start: respond to customers' demands, make a first trial order
	Develop: make a final agreement, improve existing relationship
	Continue: improve our performance, according to customer demands and market needs
9-	Start: initial communication and investigating partner (seller's reputation on their own country's credit check)
	Develop: try to fix any previous transaction mistakes and business volume
	Continue: work with customer on a regular basis

10-	Start: meet with customer in a trade fair and give our contact details. At this stage, the main thing is to introduce our company very well and take a first order
	Develop: customer contacts us to ask about price and product details. At this stage it is important to give the customer good service, like fast communication, and to make final agreement
	Continue: continue business with customer and meet them face to face
11-	Start: customer contacts us, we evaluate customer demands and make a proposal for them. In this part, our main objective is to respond to the customer's demands with good service and reasonable prices.
	Develop: get orders in and send the customer orders, visit them in their country on a regular basis. Our main objectives in this part are to get more orders from our customers and share our knowledge to make the partnership more successful.
	Continue: stay in relationship and keep placing orders on a regular basis.
12-	Search: to find customer
	Introduce: to represent the company very well
	Start: to get orders from customer
	Continue: keep business with customer running smoothly. Continue getting regular orders
13-	Start: to know customer and explain what kind of services we can provide
	Develop: get an order and make order as per their demands
	Continue: to set up long-term business relationship
14-	Start: to find the customer
	Develop: make business and get an order every time
15-	Contact: to answer the customer with accurate information
	Start: to get customer and get trial order
	Develop: improve the business volume between partners
	Continue: to keep the relationship with the customer, receiving orders on a regular basis
16-	Start: to evaluate the potential customer
	Continue: to make a relationship that continues on a regular basis and sells more products.

17-	Start: start with potential business candidate Develop: get contract and make a long-term business relationship Continue: to continue business with regular orders
18-	Start: to introduce the company to potential customers very well Develop: to make a contract and set up trust Continue: to continue business
19-	Introduce: to introduce the company very well Start: to satisfy the customer with the first order Continue: to keep the customer happy on a regular basis
20-	Search: to find a good potential customer Introduce: to introduce our company and get to know the potential customer Eliminate: to find the best customer, according to our criteria Continue: to start and continue with selected candidate
21-	Start: analyse the market, find potential customers and suitable market and introduce products Develop: start business with chosen business partner and make an agreement Continue: continue doing business together and follow the business partner
22-	Start: introduce ourselves to potential customers Develop: to find the best candidate for us and make first order Continue: to continue business with our candidate
23-	Start: find the right business partners and explain ourselves very well Develop: invite them to our companies and make a trial order and agreement Continue: to continue business with them
24-	Start: start direct contact with a business partner Develop: develop the existing relationship with them Continue: continue business on a regular basis
25-	Start: find the best candidate for our company and choose the most suitable one and make a first order Develop: fix any problems encountered in the previous order and make a final agreement Continue: continue business on a regular basis

Summary of Table 3

- Objectives of business relationship stages were explained by participants to be more complex than they first appear.

- Participants categorised the business relationship development process into three main stages:

- Start, the stage in which business partners want to introduce themselves very clearly and directly in order to find potential business candidates and work with them long term.

- In this part they search, find, and evaluate potential business partners, choose the best one and try to make a trial order.

- The main objective is finding the right partner, making a trial order, and making an agreement. This agreement can be verbal or written.

- Development is the stage where the business relationship is created, and trade volume is increased between the business partners; this is when any issues from trial orders are solved and the order process is improved so that both sides are ready to talk about future business.

- Continue: the main objective of this stage is to continue with the existing relationship and establish if there is the opportunity to sell the supplier's product in greater quantities. In addition, keeping the relationship alive, visiting business partners and collaborating on a regular basis is important for success in this stage.

- One participant claimed that relationships are based on agreements. For example, making a relationship with a good contract and making each partner's responsibilities clear is, from their perspective, is the main objective of a good business relationship.

- Another participant noted that, in a friendship-based situation, to lay the foundations upon which trust can be built, it was essential to socialise as much as possible

- Another participant described the business relationship in four stages: the search, introduce and eliminate stages serve mainly to find the best candidate to work with, which is vital for them. Then, after finding the right candidate and making an agreement, the fourth stage is to just continue doing business. It could be said that this participant or their

business culture was slightly more risk averse and therefore included a stage which would allow him to evaluate potential partner. This as well as the participant discussed subsequently diverged from majority opinion. This stood out somewhat as collectivist cultures such as the Turkish one, value social order, harmony and convergence that this brings about. Rather than these participants being considered as outliers, it is instead suggested that their approach has been informed through experiences. Perhaps negative experiences in the past may have resulted in a more vigilant approach to selection. It may have thus been insightful to question whether this approach was also used when selecting domestic partners.

- Similarly, another participant who described the business relationship in four stages, claimed that the research, introduce and start stages are necessary to choose the best candidate and start business, then the continue stage is to maintain the existing relationship.

Table -4

Q.4 What are the factors that you consider important for the BRD at each stage?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Trust, commitment, financial capability or guarantee, satisfaction, good communication, adaptation
2-	Trust, financial capacity, social bonding, communication, culture, satisfaction

3-	Trust, commitment, communication, cooperation, mutual interest, payments, a close relationship with the customer, cultural factors, satisfaction
4-	Trust, service, commitment, price, quality, financial capacity, cooperation, satisfaction, culture
5-	Trust, commitment, communication, satisfaction, social bonding, cultural similarities
6-	Trust, financial capacity, reputation, commitment, mutual trust, communication, adaptation, financial capability, communication, satisfaction
7-	Trust, product adaptation, commitment, communication, satisfaction, financial payment, communication
8-	Trust, communication, commitment, production capacity, social bonds, financial payments, satisfaction
9-	Trust, commitment, financial capacity, social time, communication, culture
10-	Trust, price, commitment, communication, service, financial payments, satisfaction
11-	Trust, communication, visiting partners on a regular basis, satisfaction, culture
12-	Trust, customer service, quality, location, cultural similarities, satisfaction
13-	Trust, commitment, communication, culture, satisfaction
14-	Trust, commitment, communication, price, service, adaptation, satisfaction, culture
15-	Trust, commitment, quality, price, delivery time, honesty, sincerity satisfaction, culture
16-	Trust, honesty, commitment, payment on time, communication, satisfaction, culture
17-	Honesty and being patient, adaptation to market, satisfaction, culture, communication, trust
18-	Trust, cooperation, commitment, service, culture, satisfaction
19-	Quality, delivery on time, price, trust, commitment, adaptation, satisfaction, culture
20-	Trust, financial capacity, commitment, performance, satisfaction, culture

21-	Trust, financial capacity, commitment, sales person capacity, satisfaction, culture
22-	Trust, commitment, financial capacity, reference and loyalty, satisfaction, culture
23-	Trust, win-win arrangements, commitment, satisfaction, culture, social time
24-	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, spending time out of work, communication, social time, culture
25-	Trust, payment on time, good communication, satisfaction in business, profitability, commitment, culture
	Summary of Table 4 • On the basis of the findings, a number of variables emerge where the business development process is concerned. Certain variables feature more heavily than others, chief amongst which include: trust, commitment, communication, satisfaction, financial payments and cultural factors. • Trust is the most-mentioned factor. Participants' definitions of BRD show that trust itself is said to define the entire relationship.
	It is so fundamental to the business relationship development process that participants mention it as a factor without which you cannot do business. • Commitment is another variable; after trust. Commitment is said to strengthen any relationship that has been established, thus making said relationship stronger and more durable. • It is also important to note that prompt financial payments were regarded as being important, this may be linked to trust however as payments indicate seriousness for the participants and are are regarded as a trust building activity/factor. • Satisfaction is often dependent on trust, commitment and financial payments. It is essential after the start stage in order to develop the business relationship and progress to the continue stage; if actors can satisfy existing business partners, they will be willing to continue the relationship.

	- Adaptation is mentioned by several participants as a factor, they note adaptation is a variable factor, the success of one's ability to adapt rests on the intention and commitment to understand the market.
	- Social bonding was also mentioned by many participants to determine their business relationship level. For participants, social bonding time created closeness in a relationship.
	- Interestingly, cultural factors were also mentioned by a number of participants as being significant variable to consider in cross-cultural business relationships. The participants thus acknowledged that having an awareness of cultural considerations and factors of their partner's respective countries allowed for strong, long lasting relationships to be built.
	- Another point mentioned by participants was product and service-related factors, which are very important in business relationships; however, these factors are related to the products rather than the relationship itself.

Table -5

Q.5 What makes the relationship successful at each stage? Can you give an example?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Commitment, payment on time How?
	When customer pay on that time that means they are trustable and accomplish their commitment and make us satisfy in business relationship.
2-	Honesty, price
	Can u explain more please?
	In life and more importantly in business honesty always allows your customer to understand you more, as well as respect you more and price

	always important to be competitive and satisfy to customer therefore we always have competitive price and adapt our product market.
3-	Start: to represent yourself well Develop: responding to the customer's demands and sending orders without any problems Continue: making the customer happy
4-	Start: explaining yourself and tolerating customers' mistakes Sustainability: commitment and trust
5-	Communication, price, service how? Good communication always allows us to understand our business partners also when you openly communicate with them, they freely talk with us about their demand so we can adapt our production price and service according to their demands. If the custom remains steady, we take the business relationship further.
6-	Trust and communication- could you explain to me more please? We once sent our customers a product and then realised later that there was a problem with the product because the customer told us. The problem was related to the raw material and was not our fault. Our customer explained that with other companies they would have terminated the relationship, but as they had worked with our company for a long time and trusted that it wasn't our fault, they felt comfortable that we would fix the problem and continued to work with us.
7-	Trust, commitment, social bonds
8-	Trust, communication, product quality and price If product quality and price do not satisfy the customer, no matter how much trust they have and how good communication is, it won't make a difference to the customer. Also, to satisfy customers, it is necessary to adapt market demand price and product requirements,
9-	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, good communication
10-	Communication, trust, price, commitment How?

	Good communication solves many problems and with good communication you can fulfil and adapt yourself with customer demands and arrange price for potential market.
11-	Trust, communication and service why?
	Trust is important to get customer and communication is also the easy to explained yourselves to customer, service is after selling tour products help to customer with service get your trust to shows to are you accomplishing your commitment and promises. When offering a service to customers it is necessary to adapt to their r demand and requirements therefore adapting to market is very important,
12-	Search: to find potential customer
	Introduce: to represent company very well
	Start: to start business with customer
	Continue: to continue business with the customer and keep them happy
13-	Honesty, trust why?
	With honesty you can get customer trust, with trust you can make customer happy and business can go to the next level.
14-	Being honest, why?
	Being honest person can make their promises and accomplish task.
15-	Trust, commitment, communication, trying to understand the customer's demands
16-	Keeping your word, being disciplined, and communication how?
	When customer keep their promises, for that mean this person means disciplined and they will do whatever they planned and promises, with this good communication they can explain themselves very well.
17-	Honesty, trust, commitment, financial capacity why?
	In business honest people always fulfil their promises, pay on that time and uphold financial responsibilities,
18-	Trust, commitment, quality, service, good communication
19-	Trust, honesty, commitment, price
20-	Trust, financial capacity, commitment, performance satisfaction, culture
21-	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, culture

22-	Communication, satisfaction adaption in market
	To make very clear agreements and talk through every detail from the beginning. This makes relationships very successful; trust and commitment are very important
23-	Trust and financial capacity why?
	Without trust you cannot do business
24-	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, good communication and cultural sensitivity
25-	Financial capacity and satisfaction, trust, commitment
	Summary of Table 5
	This answers to this question reveal that on the whole, the Turkish business people did not discern between the business stages when it came to importance. The factors were not viewed as independent, rather these were said to be interdependent and interlinked. Communication, honesty and timeliness was seen as being important throughout, however positive experiences and communication played an important role in cementing business relationships. Defects or mistakes were tolerated if the partners were trusted. Also, adaptation in the market and customer behaviour are as mentioned important variables. Open communication remains crucial to the success of a business relationship.

Table -6

Q.6 What makes the relationship unsuccessful (fail) at each stage? Can you give an example?

Respondents	Summary of Analysis
1-	Loss of trust, dishonesty, dissatisfaction in the relationship (as a result) can you explain more please?

2-	Bureaucracy between countries, competition, financial systems
3-	Trust-breaking actions, political problems, and payment problems,
4-	Political factors, breaking trust, third-party company interference, payment problems, dependence: existing customer does not want to sell to another partner
5-	Slow communication, being unclear, sending low-quality products
6-	Breaking trust. For example, when sending our items to our customers we give them credit; one customer wanted 59 days of credit, which we gave him, but we were still waiting for the payment after 5 months
7-	Breaking trust, disrespect, low level of communication
8-	Breaking trust, low-quality products, price and bad service
9-	Communication mistakes, not knowing customer's habits
10-	Breaking trust, competition, financial capacity
11-	Breaking trust, political risk, and mistakes in transportation
12-	Political crisis, mistrust, cultural misbehaviour
13-	Trust-breaking issues, letting the customer down, starting to say no to the customer, and lack of communication
14-	To make your customer upset, such as promising delivery time and quality and not following through
15-	Low quality, lack of communication, breaking trust, low level of commitment
16-	Trust-breaking actions, communication problem, cultural misunderstanding, such as disrespect and dissatisfaction
17-	Indirect factors, such as political concerns between Russia and Turkey and problems in Angola with their banking systems
18-	Trust-breaking actions, delivery time, low quality, and miscommunication
19-	Trust-breaking actions, political reasons and changing managers
20-	Trust-breaking action, lack of communication, misunderstanding each other
21-	Trust-breaking actions, payment problems, communication problems
22-	Payment problems, communication and business partner does not care as much about your products as you do
23-	Payment problem, loss of trust, lack of communication

24-	Trust-breaking actions, such as payment delays, political reasons between countries and policy makers, etc.
25-	Trust-breaking actions, low level of commitment
	Summary of Table 6 • Business participants mentioned that the factors that damage business relationships and have a negative impact on them. These mainly related to communication issues, political factors, misunderstandings and operational issues. Examining the results further, participants should have ideally been prompted to elaborate on 'trust breaking' factors. Some did and stated that faulty products or those which were not in keeping with expectations were amongst those actions that eroded trust. As well as not following through on financial responsibilities and being dishonest. • Another factor mentioned by many participants was low service quality and lack of desire to nurture or develop a business relationship with partners. In business relationships, a lack of interest to engage with potential partners has negative implications for any future relationships. • Also, lack of communication as a reason for business relationships being unsuccessful and not proceeding to other stages also emerges from the findings. Participants claimed that if there is not a healthy amount of communication with potential business partners, building a business relationship is a very slow and negative process. • Financial capability was another important point; if business partners are not able to meet their financial responsibilities, there is no way to do business with them.

	• Political reasons arise from Turkey's geographical position and its neighbours' political conditions. The last flight crisis between Turkey and Russia damaged many businesses and resulted in the termination of many relationships between business partners. As a result of this, the economic sectors in both regions were strained; this appeared to have left a lasting impression for Turkish businesses as political issues and consistently been referred to as damaging when it comes to the business relationship.

Table- 7

Q.7 How do you communicate through BRD? (Formal/ informal, language, media phone, fax, social media) how/ Why? Can you explain More?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Mail; it depends on our partner's personality but will always be formal at the beginning.
2-	Email, trade portal, face to face if they are serious.
3-	Email. WhatsApp. Starts formal, then becomes informal or stays formal, depending on the person.
4-	New customers: we attend 5-10 trade fairs, where we meet our potential partners and then we visit their office in their own country. After this we communicate through Email, Skype, or online.
5-	Formal, via email. When we get closer, we try to communicate face to face; sometimes we go there but we do all the financial and official documents by mail.
6-	Skype, Email, Viber; nowadays, Instagram is very useful for finding new customers
7-	Email, Skype, WhatsApp. For European countries, we use email and for Arab countries we can use WhatsApp, but we always keep a certain distance from them.
8-	Email at the start, formal language. Always formal with European countries.

9-	Email at the beginning and then phone calls and Skype after the relationship becomes more serious. We always keep our distance and respect our partners' privacy.
10-	We start formal but we arrange ourselves according to our customer's behaviour: Emails are always formal, but we also use WhatsApp.
11-	We get demands by email via our website and then we make proposals for them. When we send an email to them, we check whether they have received it or not and if we get a response, we arrange our sales representative to communicate with them. Before the order is sent, we invite them to Turkey and work face to face.
12-	Start formal; we prefer to send all items via email because, this way, we can put all records in an archive.
13-	We prefer to communicate by email and, for the first time, face to face. Sometimes we need to respond to our customer on WhatsApp or Viber. We believe that making sure the first meeting is face to face solves many things.
14-	Email, Viber, WhatsApp.
15-	Mail; it starts formal, then it depends on the company. If the company is very professional, they prefer mail to mail but if the customer is less professional or maybe family, they prefer Viber and WhatsApp. Our sales team can communicate quickly with them on social media.
16-	It starts with mail, because it's always professional, and phone calls.
17-	It depends how the customer approaches us; if the customer contacts us by email, in a formal way, we keep this distance. Then, if the customer wants to have fast contact, we use social fast media like Viber and WhatsApp.
18-	It starts with mail; we always prefer email so that we can keep a record.
19-	We use a variety of platforms. We always start with email, as it is formal, and then if it is something urgent, we use WhatsApp.
20-	We do all communication through email because we use all of this information in the business process.
21-	Sending an email, then phoning them. If we visit their country, we arrange appointments with them and try to speak with them face to face.

22-	We try to start contact with them face to face, then we send an email to them and then after we pass a certain point, we start communicating through social media.
23-	We get business partners' business cards at trade fairs and after we send them our products and phone numbers.
24-	Mail or WhatsApp. We use WhatsApp to share social life; also Instagram is very helpful for our company.
25-	We use social media with our customers because it helps to reduce cost of communication with the customer and allows fast communication.
	Summary of Table 7 • The business relationship communication process is vital for companies. With the development of new technologies which allow for reach and access to potential business partners, it is very easy to communicate with them. Technologically enabled communication is also said to be cost effective. • Business relationships start through mutual communication between the parties involved. During the first introduction partners exchange business cards and emails, this is said to be vital during the initial stages. • Social media improves relationships. From the beginning, business partners claimed that they could find potential business partners via social media, either on their Internet pages or Instagram. This allows them to assess their potential business partner's capacity and ability to do business. • Updating a page on Instagram allows a company to inform customers directly and daily about their progress, which is another advantage that keeps the relationship alive and reminds partners to place orders regularly.

	• Furthermore, this easy and fast form of communication allows them to communicate directly and immediately with each other. Using active social media or fast communication lines allows the staff of one company to easily form a good relationship with the staff of their partner company.
	• All companies demand official orders and payments and want these to be sent by email so that they can be archived in their system.
	• Another point in the way of communication is the ability to adapt this in keeping with customer demands and preferences.

Q.8 Overall, what is the role and importance of culture in the BRD process? Why? How? Can you give an example?

Respondents	Summary of Analysis
1-	To know a country's culture very well allows us to understand our business partners' way of doing business and their way of life. When we do business in Spain, people are so relaxed and like to talk more than business; they love to spend social time together and want to be friends. On the other hand, Germany is very strict; they want to know every detail about the product. To know those cultural differences helps so that you can be flexible and work with a variety of customers.
2-	To know about or try to understand people's culture helps to gain competitive advantages, for example, knowing the bargaining habits of Portugal and Italy. Turkey's location is a big advantage in knowing these cultures, and the flexibility, competitive environment and tolerance in Turkey are a key to doing business with different cultures.
3-	Location, flexibility, adapting to different demands. Cultural closeness to Arab nations or cultural similarities allows us to sell our product to them and makes a strong relationship with them. We have worked with our partners for nearly 20 years.

4-	Our business is on a global scale, but we have a good brand imagine in Ottoman territory and Central Asian states. We have a close relationship with them, but there is also a negative impact as they want credit before buying our product because they know we have a good relationship.
5-	Sometimes when customers come, if it is mealtime, we offer to take them out and eat together. If the customer demands anything, we try to adapt according to their demands; this could be a change in colour or to show their families around Istanbul. This is a kind of cultural understanding that helps people to trust us.
6-	Culture is vital for some countries such as Tunisia and Libya. It has helped us a lot to understand the customers' demands and their markets. However, working with other countries is not like that; for example, companies in Europe want to do everything on paper and with rules and knowing this helps the relationship progress smoothly.
7-	It very important especially for communication. In different cultures, messages and their way of communication is very different for us to understand. For this reason, we try to adapt to their cultural ways.
8-	Culture is important. For example, in a Mediterranean culture you need to be flexible and they are very hot blooded. It helps a lot to do business with Arab countries and Italy. With European customers we should do everything on paper, and they do not tolerate mistakes in business.
9-	Culture is important; as a nation we are hot blooded in a good way because we can make friendships easily and communicate easily. We can establish deep relationships with ex-Ottoman countries, and this strengthens social bonds; also, we want our customers to respect our culture and we respect them.
10-	Culture is a very important point. Some countries come to Turkey to do business, especially countries who have a Turkish background like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and ex-Ottoman counties like Bosnia and Kosovo. We do good business with them because they can speak our language, which makes them confident to come to Turkey.

11-	We have a good brand image in other countries as a Turkish company, especially in Central Asian and Arab countries.
	Also, we spend time with our customers when they visit in Istanbul and show them cultural places. This helps a lot to show who we are, and that culture is important to us.
	One time, our customer came from Germany and we showed him our factory and took him out for dinner in Istanbul; he told us that he didn't realise Turkey was like that.
12-	Culture is vital. We think cross-culturally and employ people who have been educated outside Turkey. We send them regularly to operate outside Turkey because if your staff thinks every country is the same and their demands are the same, we lose business and potential customers.
13-	Culture is important and helps us. As a Turkish nation, we like to develop bilateral relations with customers; we see them like family. This helps in Middle East countries. We make very good personal relationships in Arab and African countries because they give importance to business and trust us. In Europe it's the opposite.
14-	It is vital to understand the customer and be hospitable.
15-	Culture is vital for every nation and our hospitality influences our customer's attitude towards us. Our product is a mirror of our culture; we can sell our product easily to Mediterranean and Arab countries because they think it's close to their culture.
16-	Culture and location are important: Sometimes, for trade fairs, the location of Turkey is very useful.
	Our Arab customers likes to come to trade fairs in Istanbul and we take them for dinner and show them our factory; our hospitably is a way to gain their trust.

17-	It brings many advantages to have a Turkish background as we are sincere when we deal with customers. I can speak 5 languages, not perfectly, but when I try to speak with customers, because of my sincerity, even when I use bad expressions in a language accidentally, people know that I don't mean to. In addition, we provide some customers with a lot of help; maybe we make their reservations for them and pick up their bags, etc. When they come to Turkey, we offer them a driver and a personal tour guide for their family, which they like.
18-	It helps because Turkish culture is a mix of many Asian and European cultures and the Middle East. When our countries develop and adopt new regulations people come to see our countries. It helps to understand our customers and their way of doing business. For example, I worked with Russia for a long time; if they trust you they wants to be friends with you. This is their culture and the way of doing business with foreigners.
19-	The most important thing is to respect your customer and their individual boundaries. For example, European customers do not like you to ask them personal questions, and Arab customers do not like you to ask questions about their business volume.
20-	Culture is very important when we do business with Muslim countries, such as in Ramadan we don't expect too much from our partners in terms of performance. Likewise, some of our customers work on Sundays and some do not; we adapt to work with all of their schedules.
21	At Christmas time, European countries don't work for two weeks, so we arrange our sales performance for before Christmas. We get positive feedback from many countries, because as a Turkish company we are practical thinking and solution oriented. Furthermore, when we sell in European countries, the Turkish minority group is an advantage for us.

22-	We get positive feedback from Middle Eastern countries because of the Turkish reputation. In trade fairs, we get positive feedback from customers for being positive in business and also for our production capacity. For example, when I was in China, I noticed that they put all of their own country's products at the top.
23-	Culture is very important to start business with certain countries, such as Gulf countries; when they do business, they put their emotions into it. However, nobody buys products without considering the benefits, everybody looks for their benefit.
24-	Because of our country's position, our customers come from all over the world. Sometimes they prefer Turkish companies because we are cheap, for quick delivery times and, also, they want to see Istanbul.
25-	Yes, very important! Especially when you do business with some countries. They need to know you can understand their cultural needs, and our sensitivity about certain things related to culture is very important to them.
26-	Starting a business relationship with another country includes many problems. The main reason are the country's system and the nation's culture. From the beginning of the relationship, any mistakes can be a reason to terminate the relationship or take time to build trust. Therefore, knowing the culture and respecting potential business partners' values brings many advantages.

Table-9

Q.9 What is the role of religion in business relationships? Can you explain more ? How? Why?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	It depends. It is a plus for us to business with the Middle East, Africa and Muslim countries, but normally people are more interested in the benefits for their company than they are concerned about the religion of their partner.
2-	No, we can do business with everyone. Some Muslim countries have a positive attitude to doing business with another Muslim country.
3-	Yes, it provides trust. Customers come to our company and we pray together; it helps us to become close.
4-	It isn't a significant factor, but for brand image it can be important. For example, if you have a long beard, it's not good in Europe.
5-	There is no religion; business ethics are more important. The religion people want discuss is price.
6-	It depends on the country. Some countries find it more important than others to do business with people of the same religion. It helps to build a closer relationship with your customer when you visit their country and pray with them. However, it's not the only reason people do business.
7-	Religion is not vital; we can do business without having the same religion with everyone. The most important factor for us is mutual benefit.
8-	It's not important. Sometimes religion can have a negative impact on some European counties. They think that in Turkey, like the Middle East, people have several wives and no tolerance to alcohol, but when they come, they see that Turkey is different.
9-	Religion is not a major factor for business. If religion was a main factor, all Arab and Muslim countries would buy all of their products from Turkey.
10-	Religion is not important. People look for quality, service and trust.
11-	Religion is not important for us; money is money and we do not mind the colour of money.

12-	It is not a direct factor, but it can help with mutual understanding. It helps to build relationships sometimes. For example, the effect of Ramadan can mean our business partners' performance decreases, but we can tolerate this because we share the same religion.
13-	Yes, in Europe there is a bad brand image for Muslims. On the contrary, in Middle Eastern countries it helps to improve social relationships because you can find common things to talk about.
14-	It's different for different customers. For Muslim customers, having the same religion can be a positive point in the beginning, but really everybody is more concerned about their profit, so there is no direct influence.
15-	It helps us a lot with Arab customers when we do business. Religion can be a key component to improve the social bond between partners. In addition, sharing a religion helps us to make good friends; my point is that there are over 1.5 billion Muslim people in the world. European customers look to their pockets when they want a chair; they can find a given quality in Italy for 50 euro, but they can buy the same quality from us for 25 euros.
16-	Religion is not an important factor. If it was important, many countries would prefer to buy their products in other Muslim countries. However, we see, especially in the Gulf countries, that they prefer European and American stuff.
17-	It's not directly related. Nobody chooses us because of our religion, but it can give us some advantages with other countries; some people prefer us because of our religious and cultural background.
18-	There is no direct importance; people look to benefit their company if they are happy with the product, price and service, they are happy with us.
19-	Yes our Muslim customers choose us because we are Muslim and also because they know we never use pork material in our products. That makes our Muslim customers feel secure, because business is based on trust and this takes the relationship to a higher level.
20-	Religion is not a direct influence; when I asked my customers about it, the majority of them didn't think it made a difference.

21-	I do not think it directly affects business. In business people are just looking out for their own profit.
22-	Religion is not directly important. The majority of our customers are not the same religion as us.
23-	There is no direct influence. On the contrary, sometimes being Muslim has a negative effect in the Gulf countries as they prefer American companies.
24-	There is no direct impact. People do not do business with someone just because they are of the same religion. For us the price, quality and service are more important.
25-	Sometimes it does; it depends on whether you manufacture something which requires religious sensitivity, such as shoes. You need to be sure not to use pig leather and in the food business it's important to consider the importance of halal meats.
	Summary of Table 9 • Religion is a key factor in understanding a nation's rules and their way of living. People live their life according to their own religious rules and values. However, in reality religion was not a deciding factor when it came to choose a business partner. • Participants claimed that people consider their own benefit in their business activities. For example, the main reasons for people in selecting a partner are trust, good prices and good service. • Some participants even claimed that sharing the same religion could be a disadvantage with business partners. • Another comment raised by participants was that, if people considered religion as an important criterion, then all Muslim people would only do business with each other. • Religion can have a negative impact on business relationships due to terrorist attacks by people of the same religious group, creating a negative reputation. • On the contrary however, a number of the participants did acknowledge that shared religious values increased understanding

| | between two parties. A shared religion offered businesses the opportunity to bond with one another. Some participants explicitly referred to the Gulf region and how despite being situated in Europe, a shared religion provided some Turkish businesses with a mutual sense of understanding. |
| | • Despite this however, a shared religious identity was not regarded as being too important as benefits such as costs emerged as being more important factors when it came to doing business. |

Table-10

Q.10 Overall, is knowledge of a foreign language important in the BRD process? Why? How? Can you give an example?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Positive, it helps to make us feel in a very close social relationship with a business partner. Also, it gives us the confidence to explain ourselves.
2-	Its help a lot. I can speak English and its helps me a lot to communicate with my business buyer directly, without using any translator, saving time and money.
3-	Without language, you cannot sell any products to anyone, therefore it is very positive and beneficial.
4-	Very important; I sent my son to China to learn Chinese because the future is there, and I always have problems with my Chinese customers.
5-	It's vital and undeniably important. English I won't mention because it's compulsory, but they should learn all market languages. In Turkey, Arabic and Russian are the most useful, after English.
6-	Foreign language competence is vital, especially as knowledge of the local language helps build a closer relationship with your customer. However, even knowing another language is popular, for example in Algeria we speak French. Russian is also important to access that market.
7-	We need to communicate with our partners very often and understand each other very clearly, therefore language is very important.

8-	It is helps to understand each other and reduces barriers between partners. Having an interpreter does not give the intention I want to give to my customer because sometimes when they translate, they lose the meaning, the emotion.
9-	It's a big contributor in a business relationship. Without language, some communication is always missing, and this stunts business development.
10-	Yes! Language helps in two ways: first, it helps a lot to communicate and speak to our partners in their own language, just basic things and being able to make jokes helps make the relationship very close.
11-	Language is very important to interact and make agreements between countries.
12-	It really helps to communicate with partners and to find the right customer.
13-	Language helps to improve business. With language, we understand each other easily because communication is very important.
14-	It is very important because it helps us to understand people. I can speak English, but I think, for Turkey, Arabic is also important.
15-	It helps business from my point of view. To make business with other nations, you must be able to understand each other.
16-	It is vital; without this language we cannot do business, it is essential for fast response to customers.
17-	It is 100 percent important. Without language, you are blind and deaf to communicate with people.
18-	Yes, it helps you to explain yourself, and helps to look for opportunities in other countries.
19-	Yes, it's very important but it's not the main factor, otherwise all translators would be businessmen.
20-	It is very important. I went to one country and spoke with my customer for half an hour; the interpreter talked for five minutes, so I realised that the interpreter was not explaining things my way. I decided to bring my own interpreter in future.
21-	Language is a good bridge to make a good relationship with business partners.

22-	To speak a foreign language with potential business partners allows you to communicate easily and try to understand them.
23-	Foreign language is very important – we've seen that translators cannot show the same expression that you want to use.
24-	It is very important in our language.
25-	Yes, it is very important. I can speak English and German because I learned them at college. However, I try to learn small survival words in every country, which allows me to say nice things to people as a gesture.
	Summary of Table 10 • Much like culture, language was overwhelming viewed with high regard when it came to developing and maintaining the business relationship. In fact, for the participants this was vital and crucial is very important to make a relationship active and fast. Shared languages were key to communication- this for the respondents appeared to be the lifeblood of any relationship. Some participants had even gone as far as to prepare themselves for the future by learning 'Chinese' as he anticipated that much demand would emerge from China in the future. • From this it could be inferred that the participant was acutely aware of not only the importance of language, but communication above all, when it came to the business relationship. Language competence allows companies to build strong relationships with their business partner. To speak directly with a business partner without any translator or any other third party allowed them to foster closer relationships. • Also, Turkish business people often learn languages in order to make business partners feel comfortable; usually English, Arabic and Russian, mainly because of their potential business market. • Another point participant highlighted was the importance of knowing some key survival phrases in the target country's language, to help partners feel confident in their company and also to create a sincere business relationship with them.

Table-11

Q.11 Which countries do you like doing business with? Why?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	Spain, Africa, North Iraq, Arab countries. Cultural similarity and profit margin.
2-	Italy and Germany, simple and straightforward.
3-	Egypt; we have a very good relationship with our buyer. We have known him for a long time. After Egypt, we can say Arab countries. I feel at home and can guess their response easily.
4-	I cannot say any nation as it depends on the people.
5-	Africa, because there are many opportunities there. And European countries because the process is always very smooth; when you sign a contract, everything is secured by law.
6-	Libya, because they do what they promise and there is opportunity to do business there.
7-	Israel, France and all European countries. We've been doing business with Israel for such a long time and France as well. Political factors affect our business, but we do it anyway, we are very happy since we started.
8-	European countries because payment and regulation is very smooth. Selling products in Iran as well, because there is a lot of opportunity there.
9-	European countries because they are very serious in their business agreements.
10-	European countries because to do business with them is very easy, especially payment and transport.
11-	Europeans - they are straightforward, and an agreement is an agreement.
12-	Saudi Arabia and the Middle East countries, but that's mainly related to the firm's base.
13-	European and Arab. We produce goods for European countries because our quality and price are good for them. In addition, we sell our products to Arab countries where people buy because of cultural similarity, especially kitchen stuff.

14-	Europe because it helps us to develop new products and keeps us updated on new world regulations. We can use this advantage in other markets such as the Middle East.
15-	Arab countries.
16-	European countries because of their payment and ethics.
17-	European and Arab countries.
18-	European, especially Italian, and Iraq because they trust us and that makes it easy to do business.
19-	England - smooth business.
20-	European countries.
21-	New markets because they allow us to make good business developments with new products and it keeps us updated.
22-	European countries.
23-	European countries.
24-	European countries because of the ease of business; everything is clear, fast payment and they have good trade agreement between partners.
25-	Russia. We've done business with Russia since 2000; our business was good until the flight crisis; we still hope the sanctions will be removed by the Russian government.

Summary of Table 11

- Turkish business showed a preference, albeit one that was slightly weighted in favour of European countries. The reasons for this were varied, though the straightforwardness and direct nature of Europeans was regarded as being a major reason for this. Despite earlier acknowledging the differences between Spanish and Germans, the business partners referred to all Europeans as a monolith when discussing these preferences. This suggested that despite differences in language and culture, Europeans maintained certain characteristics which were viewed as favourable and homogenous when it came to business.

- In addition to this, political factors and stable business environments further added favour to European businesses. These insights remain fascinating as cultural distance did not appear to be a major factor in determining preferences.

- Political issues such as sanctions i.e. Russia, following the flight crisis disrupted business dealings going to show just how much politics impacted businesses regardless of size and markets

- Physical distance also played a part in shaping preferences. This was always going to be interesting considering that Turkey finely balances East and West due to its strategic location between West Asia and Europe. The strategic business advantage offered by its physical location continues to be exploited by Turkish businesses.

- Closeness to Gulf regions allowed access to these markets, whilst allowing Turkey to enter certain markets due to shared cultural similarities that have been facilitated by religion. According to some participants, the shared religious values allowed them with strategic advantage as they were able to be entered key industries such as food, kitchenware and textiles.

- Another advantage, of course, is price. Turkey benefits from the advertising Turkish TV series provide, raising interest in Turkish products and the country itself.

	• The African market was mentioned by three participants because of its capacity to do business and the opportunities that are opening up in this area- this suggested that business demand also played a role in shaping interests and preferences for markets. Participants were open in that they did not limit business interests to shared culture or physical distance • African countries do not have any special production lines; they come to Turkey easily and know what they need. Turkish Airlines provide direct flights and allow a high luggage allowance, which helps partners come to Turkey to do business.

Table- 12

Q.12 Which countries do you dislike doing business with? Why?	
Respondents	**Summary of Analysis**
1-	We can work with all countries. **Why** As long as they keep their promises and we are satisfy with heir order and working style we can work with any country?
2-	I can do business with all people, as long as they pay the product prices.
3-	Iran, because of payment and custom regulations.
4-	We can do business with all nations.
5-	Iran, because regulations and peoples' attitudes are different from ours.
6-	Iraq because they have changed their payment method. They used to use cash import credit which was good for us, but now it is based on cheques, therefore payments come to us too late.
7-	We can do business with everyone.
8-	We can do business with all countries.
9-	We do not have any problem with any nation.
10-	No, I can sell all products in every country.

11-	We can do business with everyone.
12-	Tunisia and Algeria, as it's very difficult to communicate with them.
13-	We like to do business with all countries.
14-	We can do business with all people.
15-	We can do business with any nations; for example, people in Israel have a very opposite opinion of the world to my own, but I can do business with them.
16-	We can do business with all nations, as long as they make a payment.
17-	We can do business with everyone.
18-	Iran because doing business with them is difficult and complex.
19-	Iran because they always try to cut the price.
20-	We can do business with any countries.
21-	I can do business with any countries.
22-	I cannot say any other countries.
23-	Iran
24-	Iran
25-	We can do business with any nations.

	Summary of Table 12
	• Turkish business people do not want to mention any nations that they don't like to do business with. From their perspective, they can do business with every nation. Nations who have a gained a negative reputation when it comes to issues such as payment, were not excluded, rather payment options were adapted to reduce risks of non-payment • The majority of participants stated that 'business is business' claiming that they are willing to do business with anyone who is willing to do business with them and pay. However, three participants did mention Iran as a difficult country to do business with, mainly due to their custom regulations and the attitude of Iranian business partners. Another reason is because of international sanctions, which imbued business with Iranians with a degree of difficulty. The mention of Iran is especially interesting. Despite physical proximity and shared religious values, the culture of Iranian partners was said to be complex and for some Turkish businesses-off-putting. • Iraq is also mentioned because they have changed their payment methods, but this is a temporary problem. • One participant mentioned Tunisia and Algeria as countries they did not like to work with because of the difficulties in communicating with them.

4.3 Summary

This chapter analysed the findings of 25 semi-structured interviews with the managers and owners of Turkish businesses. The interview questions were based on the research questions. The participants' views on a number of topics were addressed, most notably their definitions

of business relationships, their thoughts on the key factors that influence BRD and the importance of culture in international BRD.

The next chapter further analyses these findings and provides in-depth discussion of the participants' responses, with particular reference to their importance in relation to the research questions.

Chapter Five Discussion

5.1 Overview

The aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gap in literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish manufacturing SMEs. This chapter presents the findings of the empirical investigation and provides an in-depth analysis of the key themes that emerged from the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

These key themes will be analysed within the framework of the three interview topics described in the method chapter:

- Participants' definition of BRD

- Participants' views on the stages of BRD

- Participants' views on the role of various factors in BRD.

These key themes are:

- Trust
- Commitment
- Communication
- Adaption
- Satisfaction
- Culture, which includes language and religion.

5.2 Definition of Business Relationship Development

The first topic for discussion in the interviews related to definitions of BRD and perceptions of what this actually entailed. This allowed the researcher to better analyse other topics based on the participants' understanding of BRD. Definitions remained varied though the most

common sentiment (80% of the sample) related to BRD being viewed as a means through which money is brought into a country. A business relationship was viewed as being crucial when it came to securing capital inflows. Beyond actual capital gains, for other participants the BRD was a relationship that was cultivated through trust, a 'proper' way of conducting business as well as one which allows long-term engagement and cooperation with a business partner.

From the result, it emerges that Turkish businesses, at least in the SME sector, very much view business relationships as a socio-political tool as opposed to a purely economic one. Whilst the later discussions with the interviewees reveal the economic importance of these transactions and how these trump cultural factors, business relationships are foremostly viewed as a tool to cement international relations and maintain diplomacy. When dealing in business, it emerged that the Turkish participants implicitly viewed themselves as ambassadors for their country; their own identities as business owners were intrinsically tied into their national values and collective identity.

What is even more interesting was the separation of politics from these relationships; at face value this appeared to be contradictory however the participants lamented the role politics played in business and how sanctions negatively shaped their dealings i.e. Turkish flight incident and Russia, whilst this did not impact business relations, the growing presence of sanctions stand in the way of strengthening business ties. As mentioned, whilst national identity deeply influenced how the businesses viewed themselves, they actively disassociated themselves with political issues- evidence for this can be found in attitudes towards Israel- whilst ties between Turkey have remained strained over a number of decades (Efron, 2018), a number of participants suggested that this play little part in their own attitudes towards their Israeli partners whom they valued. On the contrary, whilst relations with neighbouring Iran have been overwhelmingly peaceful as both Turkey and Iran remain major trade partners (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018), this closeness was not found within the empirical data. A number of participants struggled to maintain and develop relationships with Iranian business partners whom they found to be challenging.

Relating these insights backs to the literature review; current definitions of business relationships concentrate on the company level and marketing activities, although Swift (2017) did refer to the national level, claiming that in international trade the business relationship largely depends on the trade agreements of the participating countries' policy

makers. Whilst there is evidence to support Swift's assertions, contrasting insights also emerge as national level politics were not necessarily mirrored at a business level. Some participants maintained that despite tensions surrounding Islam in some European countries, as well as a negative perception of Muslims in general, they were able to cultivate and develop business relationships. In addition, Turkey has fostered stable trade relations with their Iranian neighbours however this cohort of business partners were said to be the least preferred as far as the participants were concerned.

The above insights are especially interesting when one takes into account research by Kemming and Sandikci (2007) who over ten years ago examined Turkey's 'nation brand' and how this would impact the country's accession to the European Union. Kemming and Sandiki (2007) maintained that Turkey had failed to thus far garner positive perceptions within the rest of Europe and would therefore struggle to secure a place at the EU. Pierini (2018) maintains that little has changed in over a decade as Turkey has in recent years distanced itself from EU principles of law that it had previously subscribed to. That said however, the discussion with the participants reveal that European business partners are amongst the most valuable and preferred as far as Turkish SMEs are concerned as trade between the two has largely flourished regardless of political developments. It appears that politics are discarded and not carried forth by those in the SMEs sector, both within Turkey and beyond. As far as existing scholarship is concerned, there is little research on this phenomenon and in particular research relating to how national identities are used to market businesses.

As such, few to no authors have mentioned the contribution to the national economy or brand image, so the opinions of the Turkish participants shed a different light on business relationships, contributing to the field of knowledge. Both Cleave et al., (2016) and Bergqvist (2009) offer the term 'place branding' to express regions/countries through actions, attitudes, culture, slogans and logos. In the face of increasing global competition, place branding offers a new avenue through which to secure competitive advantage. Jones and Mowatt (2016) add to this, that public perceptions of a country or region play a major role in their decision to purchase products and services. That said however, Cleave et al., (2016) maintain that there has been little empirical research and evidence regarding place branding and its effectiveness in attracting and retaining business. The research from the interviews however suggests that businesses, at least in Turkey may be partaking in conscious place branding as they shed the 'negative' aspects of political culture in a bid to attract business

partners and develop long-term relationships. This was evident in opinions which indicated that positive business partner impressions based on initial contact with Turkish firms, would set a successful precedent for all future business dealings.

Returning to definitions of the business relationship, at least 98% of all participants felt a business relationship is based on trust; without trust, there can be no relationship. This confirms the opinion of many researchers. Hallén et al. (1991), for example, claimed that trust is central to all relational exchanges between partners. Whilst trust was the most commonly cited as well as the first factor mentioned by the participants, other factors included honesty, commitment, satisfaction and communication. This very much reflected the dimensions mentioned by Voldnes (2014); the author suggests that trust, commitment, communication, satisfaction and adaptation are amongst factor which are granted the most consideration when it comes to selecting business partners. The findings from the interviews serve to mirror this as these were consistently cited.

Participants offered building and developing a long-term relationship as a third definition. This indicates that they value time; setting up a business relationship is not easy and to change your business partner is both time consuming and expensive. Participant 17 even likened BRD to marriage, requiring serious investment in time and energy (see also Zineldin, 2002). This highlights an emerging theme, that the development of a business relationship means doing business 'the proper way.' In this respect, 4 of the 25 participants indicated that they saw international business relationships as a formal way of working, agreeing a contract that would last a long time. One participant explained that agreement is especially important because a relationship with a non-Turkish business partner is challenging and potentially risky.

Very few participants commented only on the importance of their own company, even though the literature suggests that setting up a business relationship, finding customers and penetrating new markets, is the main purpose of business.

In summary, the participants defined the development of a business relationship as a way of bringing money to their country and their companies, by creating long-term relationships with companies in other nations and by working in a formal, contractual fashion. In addition to this, the business relationship served as a promotional vehicle for the participants' country, for which they felt they were acting as ambassadors.

Following discussion on its definition, the participants were asked to give their thoughts on the development stages of business relationships, as explained in the next section.

5.3 Business Relationship Stages

As mentioned in section (4.2), the stages of business relationship development are important for both parties. When interviewed on this topic, 17 of the 25 participants described three stages:

- Start

- Develop

- Continue.

This section will consider the participants' comments on each of these stages separately in order to establish the typical journey of a Turkish/non-Turkish business relationship.

5.3.1. Stage 1: Start

For the majority of interviewees, the 'start' stage includes researching, evaluating company-to company introductions, and contact with a potential business candidate often involving a trial.

Respondent 13 explained:

Start means the beginning of the business relationship with a potential partner. In the beginning, they search the market, finding potential partners by process of elimination; they do this by looking at how they do business with other companies, if they have problems with anyone in their company history, and considering their financial capabilities.

Respondent 7 noted that this stage varies depending on the country with which the company intends to do business:

We choose our target country by situation. If we know a mutual friend who does business with the country and who can give us information, then we go for it. When you want to start to sell your products in a new country, you need to find a way to sell. For this reason, we look for successful business partners to sell our products. This gives us an advantage to sell our product and get into the market, to make our products known by consumers.

From this Respondent's viewpoint, it is important to have a mutual friend between the two companies to provide recommendations and reduce potential trust issues.

The starting point for Turkish business people involves other aspects: a pre-relationship search, evaluation and contact with the potential candidate. The literature similarly suggests pre-relationship stages (Ford 1980; Ford et al. 1998, 2003; Grönroos 1980, 1982; Ng, 2008, 2009). It is also worth mentioning that Turkish business appear to bypass factors such as social, geographical and cultural distance (Edvinsson, 1985). The focus is driven by demand- is there a demand for the product that is being sold- this question sits at the focal point of the first stage as far as the Turkish participants are concerned. Word of mouth is crucial to this stage, perhas signalling the nature of Turkish culture and the closeness of personal relationships and the trust that comes about as a result. Rather than conduct independent research into the market, as advocated by Claycomb and Frankwick (2010), Turkish businesses appear to highly valued word of mouth recommendations.

5.2.1.1 Search

One of the main objectives of the first stage is to find a potential business partner with whom a long-standing business relationship can be established. Respondent 5 explained this in detail:

There are several types of research that are carried out to find potential candidates. For example, searching on the Internet - when you enter a country into Google and look at which companies come up with the same products as you, you can work out who they are and try to get information about them. This is a popular way to carry out secondary research on potential business partners; it is something I would call a 'table search.

Several respondents mentioned using a web platform to find clients; the most useful of which were www.alibaba.com and www.globalsources.com.

A respondent noted the importance of trade fairs in finding potential business partners.

We find our business partners mainly in trade fairs. In these trade fairs, we have an open stand and we try to explain ourselves to clients who show an interest in our company and product. In this process, we can see who is serious to do business with us according to their questions and attitudes. After that, we exchange our business cards and contact information;

sometimes customers place small orders, during the last day. If a candidate or potential business partner asks about delivery and warranty or product safety regulation with us then they normally place small orders. After we get small orders, we offer to show the clients our factory and go to dinner with them. If both sides agree to do business, we begin.

Interestingly, many respondents mentioned the importance of trade fairs, because it allows them to speak face to face, which is very important in order to understand the needs of potential partners. In this way, the two companies move straight to direct face-to-face contact as a short as doing so allows for intentions to be made clear and potential clients and their situations to be gauged effectively.

Respondent 9 also commented on how the company alters the way it contacts potential businesses in different countries:

We go to the wholesale market area, go door to door explaining our products, and give them our catalogue. It's very beneficial for us especially in Africa and the North African market.

This technique is particularly helpful for business with countries, which have a wholesale market, like a hub. In addition, it helps to find many potential partners at the same time. It is a different method of research again, because in this case itis possible to observe the company directly and its customers, which help understanding the target country's market.

Another form of research mentioned in the interviews was when a potential partner makes the initial contact.

Somebody finds us and tries to do business with us. If they are serious, we directly start to talk with them, ask what they want and what their conditions are, make deals to sell. If we are happy, we research them and eventually make them distributors. (Respondent 11)

This point highlights that starting a relationship in this way, although unplanned, is a unique opportunity as the potential partner is keen to do business with the company. This is a common aim: to find enthusiastic and willing partners to promote the company's product.

Many researchers suggest finding a potential business partner through advertisements, brochures and other channels (Grönroos1980), scanning the market (Conway and Swift, 2000).

Larson's (1992) claim that various should confirm the potential candidate's reputation reference techniques is supported by our findings. The method of door-to-door visits is new,

but in our case was identified by participants only for North African and the Middle East markets.

5.2.1.2 Evaluation

After finding potential business partners, suppliers evaluate them in several ways.

The 'evaluation point' describes the part in the first stage in which partners try to get to know and evaluate each other.

We call this the evaluation point because we try to eliminate unsuitable potential candidates. We try to decide on the best candidates to work with and contact them. Then, we start business with them. (Respondent 11)

Companies must analyse their potential partners' financial capabilities, their supply chain, distribution channels, payment options and other information about them.

This is essential in the first stages of a business relationship, the evaluation process. You cannot start a business without evaluating your potential partner. At this point, you try to get information about them – what they do, what they sell, what kind of competitive advantage they have and if they are capable of selling our products and, more importantly, if they would make a good representation of our product and if we can work with them without any problems. (Respondent 4)

After choosing a potential business partner, it is important to build trust so that both parties feel comfortable with the agreements before proceeding to trial orders.

Wilson (1995) considered evaluation as a critical part of future success for the relationship, and Kaunonen (2010) claimed that cost analysis is especially important. Other authors (Dwyer et.al, 1987; Edvinson, 1985) include evaluation of performance, and establishing rules determine their actions in the future.

5.2.1.3 Trial orders or initial transactions

After finding and evaluating potential customers, the company decides who to do business with, eliminating the unsuitable ones. Both sides test the relationship when they make their first transaction, the first serious business activity between them.

Business starts slowly. The first order taken could be seen as a trial order, to test the product and delivery. This allows both sides to show they are serious in their own promises. As

indicated by its name, this trial order is a test of the relationship. The first order is always important and brings advantages to both sides in identifying potential problems, testing the supplier's quality and delivery time and the buyer's payments, capacity and satisfaction with the service and quality.

In particular, the seller tries to satisfy the customer.

Business orders start at this point. The first payment is made and so this is a test for the business relationship, to see what works or not. In this process, time management is key; it is a case of actions speak louder than words. (Respondent 4)

The trial is also a process to determine the business relationship's future. If the first order is completed without any serious problems, it allows both sides to carry the business relationship to another level of socialisation between sales people; both companies are important in making a relationship. During the trial order, both sides communicate with the literature confirms the importance of the trial (Das and Teng 2002; Arino and de la Torre, 1998; Kaunonen, 2010) for the reasons outlined above.

The 'start' stage is the foundation of a business relationship; for this reason, there are a number of key objectives to achieve at this point:

- Try to get information about potential business partners

- Give them information about ourselves Reach an agreement

- Try to start business

When you meet face the face, you can explain yourself very well and they can understand how serious you are. (Respondent 12)

The starting stage it is so important to create a good relationship with your business partners because I believe you start as you mean to go on. (Respondent 23)

In this process, we must tell our potential business partner about the kind of service we can provide. (Respondent 13)

5.3.2. Stage 2: Develop

At this stage, both companies aim to increase the volume of trade with their new partner. It assumes that both are gaining experience of their partner, that the trial previous orders were

good, and the partners are happy, indicating mutual benefit from proceeding to the development stage.

After the first order, when we sort the starting stages with our customer, we try to sell them more products with confidence. At this point, they are sure about our service and want to sell more products. The aim of the business is to make more money and find a real seller and supplier source to make it happen. (Respondent 3)

That is, as confirmed in the literature (Kaunonen, 2010; Ford et al., 2013) the relationship has been tested and any uncertainty about each other has been resolved; leading to a willingness to increase contact as far as both parties are concerned.

Trust and commitment increase at this level. This may be achieved if both parties are willing to take action such as visiting customers (Andersen, 2001) developing a more personal relationship (Andersen and Kumar, 2006) or sharing more information (Milman and Wilson, 1995). The respondent agreed that mutual benefit and profit margin are also important for both sides.

When the first order goes well our business partners start to increase their orders, we see clearly that they are beginning to trust us more and it shows us they are also willing to try to negotiate and talk over any minor problems to make things clear. We try to communicate with them the most updated sales statistics. At this point, I tell my sales office person to contact them often; for this thing, they use Skype a lot. (Respondent 12)

 Adaptation and adjustment are important, and both sides must be willing to put effort, energy and finance into the relationship to increase business (Kaunonen, 2010; Arino and de la Torre, 1998; Ring and Van de Ven. 1994). Communication remains key to strengthening the relationship (Pett and Dibrell 2001), and is of mutual benefit in increasing profit, trusting each other's actions with confidence. Communication goes from formal to informal and there are no 'working hours' limits, with partners communicate at any time and giving each other their personal phone numbers. Nevertheless, all orders and important issues are still arranged by email.

Meetings and spending social time together enhance bonds and close ties between businesses. Furthermore, respondent 9 claimed that this is the best way to get to know your business partner and gain their confidence.

In this process, our business partners start to increase their orders and they trust us. We make them a discount according to their business order level …We also spend more time with the company's professionals or owner; we try to visit and bring them some gifts to show our friendship with them. I believe this process is very vital to gain their trust and face-to-face meeting is the best way to get closer to them.

At this stage, the volume of business between the parties increases; the companies' staff, mainly sales representatives, communicate with each other frequently, to discuss products, potential, and market demand and growth. Respondent 17 added

Our sales team visits them at least twice a year and communicates with them every week, and especially around order times, they will talk every day. I always encourage my sales team to speak with our partners often, because we have seen the results in our experience and it definitely helps the business and the product.

At this point, payment is especially important, whether in full or by giving credit. This confirms that both parties want to increase business, trust therefore begins to develop as both parties begin to consider their relationship in the long-term.

When we trust our business partner and we have reached the 'develop' stage, when we sign an official contract, we start to give them credit. However, this credit depends on which country they are from because of the risk factor. (Respondent 16)

Turkish business people see this stage as important as the start stage, given that formation of the business relationship or official agreement is completed at this point, and there can be recovery from any problems from the start stage. As Respondent 4 said,

If we have any problems with payment and/or product quality, we try to solve them first so that we can develop and talk more business with each other.

In opening credit with customers, whilst ensuring certain boundaries are not crossed, partners increased in closeness and as a result, partners will often ask for flexible payment options and try getting more of a discount. Respondent 13 was aware of this:

Our customer demands an open credit account for us to work with them. This point is very important to secure the relationship for the company's benefit. We always try to find a middle way.

5.3.3. Stage 3: Continue

By the time third stage comes around, the business relationship has been tested, grounded and mutual trust has been established. The company is now able to offer more advantages to their business partner and both parties can better understand each other. Business partners acknowledge their mutual benefit (Pett and Dibrell, 2001) and are fully integrated with each other (Larson, 1992).

The most important aspect of the 'continue' stage is stability; the relationship becomes stable and continues on a regular basis. After contacting business partners and speaking with them, the company is happy and wants to keep working with its partners. Participants commented on maintaining a relationship at a stable level, stating that this stage is the result of successful start and development stages.

When we reach the continue stages, we are very relaxed – especially if our relationship with our partners is for more than 3 years. After years, you know each other very well and you do not have any problems with minor issues, like any problem in product quantity and payment, which are more important in the beginning. (Respondent 8)

Respondent 7 also commented that the most important factor at this stage is the country's economic situation and how this could affect the future of the business relationship.

In the continue stage, we do business with our partner in accordance with the economic situation of the country and its market's potential. Sometimes it is stable, and we continue at a routine level, but sometimes it is booming and our buyer's willingness to buy and sell more defines our business level.

Participant 5 commented that this level is the mature stage of the relationship, when the relationship becomes very strong. The partners know each other and are flexible in handling any problems. They also still invest in the business relationship by attending meetings with customers and visiting them on a regular basis.

A business relationship, or relationship of any kind, requires you to be sensitive and partake in needs investment. This means you visit partners and see them regularly, you remember them on their special days, such as the director or owner's birthday, because laziness is not good for business. (Respondent 5)

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Interestingly, Participant 15 added that, at this stage, companies should be careful because any mistakes made by the sales team, or other company staff, may bring about problems for some countries.

Whatever happens, it does not matter how close we are with them, our customer is our customer and I always tell my team to keep their distance and not to cross boundaries. Sometimes when you get close, you are tempted to make jokes and be very comfortable with your business partner, but this is not always well received. I can certainly say that some countries give great importance to distance, such as Middle Eastern and Asian customers. However, it is not all about culture, sometimes it is simply to do with an individual's personality.

Communication becomes informal; it is fast and active on a daily basis. Sometimes, in a long-term close relationship, business partners keep in contact with each other even on holiday or after working hours.

When we spend a lot of time with our business partner, after reaching a certain level of business relationship, then we exchange our personal phone numbers and try to keep contact with each other. I have one customer, we share our kids' pictures on WhatsApp and that just shows how we feel – how comfortable we are with each other. (Respondent 7)

At this stage, trust and commitment are at their highest. In the beginning of the relationship, trust and commitment were in their infancy but grew throughout the first and second stages. When a relationship reaches the continue level, trust ultimately acts as a strengthening factor; when partners trust each other, they know their efficiency potential and aims in business. This makes them feel secure in themselves. Commitments make the relationship strong and stable.

After years, we trust each other more and more; any problem that happens in business orders, products or payments is easily for given. We know the customer and trust them. This high level of commitment and trust allows us to take risks and tolerate some mistakes. (Respondent 15)

Comfort makes the relationship stable, allowing the partners to be in tune with each other, and making and investing more money takes the relationship to another level. Respondent 14 stated that:

When we reach the continue level, when we believe and trust our partner, we try to invest in their country. We have done this in two countries; I can give only one of their names – Algeria. To make products there requires a significant amount of money and time, but in the end, it is worth it if we make more money, and our relationship with our partner is like a family, which is very good. When you can trust, you can do more business.

By this stage, the business relationship between partners is strong, sincere and close, which means both parties trust each other and their experience since the relationship started; they are optimistic. When the relationship with customer is in a stable position, two things are important: communication and listening. These are vital for this stage: if any problems occur or the market changes direction, it is important that customer concerns are heeded as being too relaxed can cause disadvantages for both parties. Reflecting on this stage, respondent 13 said,

The last stage is very important for a business relationship. When we have completed the first two levels, finding our partner, introducing ourselves and then developing the relationship, we have accomplished the most difficult parts. The first and second parts are more important. People are scared or have concerns in the beginning and middle, but after those points, we trust our business partners.

Participant 25 commented that at this level, it is necessary to speak with customers regarding products and update them with news. There might be some decrease in business partner's performance, so communication is a useful tool to solve this problem.

The continue stage is the point we want to reach. For our customers this point means the business relationship is secured. After this point, performance management is very important, as we need to consider and look after our customer. Management is important because we need to support our customer with the product and information, comparing their sales performance with previous years and with the market potential. Sometimes our customer looks at another product, to make more money, or does not pay enough attention to our products; because of this, communication is very important.

The objectives for this stage are to:

- Ensure that the business relationship is stable

- Continue to increase business volume with partners

- Keep business partners informed about new products

- Monitor partner's sales performance.

Participants also claimed that socialisation at this stage further strengthens their personal relationship with your partner. For this reason, continued socialisation can also be seen as an objective.

In order to keep partners informed about new product development and keep an eye on their sales performance, communication is very important.

When you set up a business relationship with someone and reach the continue level, it allows you to understand and respect each other more. In this level, we just relax, as if on autopilot we stand by our relationship through market and country conditions. If there is an opportunity for growth, we look forward to increase. (Respondent 22)

At this stage, reviewing the findings reveals that the most common feature and one that is consistently mentioned is trust. Ford (2013) and Jia and Rutherford (2010) warned within the literature, a successful deal does not at any point cement a relationship. As despite a show of commitment, partners may still view one another as being antagonists or strangers. Conflicts of interests may also come about. Ultimately, it seems that trust is the glue or binding force of each stage and as a result the relationship as a whole. One can start to see just how pertinent the statements offered by Dwyer et al. (1987) and Zhao and Cavusgil (2006), both of whom maintain that trust is crucial in business relationships, regardless of whether these are cross-cultural. Trust is in fact even more of a force in business relationships of this nature given that both parties have a lower locus of control, when compared to domestic operations. Trust in this sense is indeed indispensable as described by Liang et al., (2009). It is also worth noting that communication and satisfaction emerge as the foundations upon which trust is built. These factors are explicitly mentioned at all three of the stages as this allows credibility to be built. Sirdeshmukh et al (2002) offer benevolence in addition to integrity as being a major factor involved in building business

relationships. The extension of credit described above is one such act that could be considered as benevolent within the context of business.

\One further issue, raised by Andersen and Kumar (2006) and confirmed by Participant 13, is that when a business relationship reaches the continue level the partners may be willing to take a risk to make the relationship even more successful.

5.3.4. Ending or termination

One of the most interesting pieces of information to emerge from the interviews was the stance that participants took on ending business relationships. They agreed that there is no termination stage, and 9 of the 25 claimed that business relationships never end:

In business, there can always be another opportunity with business collaborates; because of that never finish or lose your relationship with your partner. (Respondent 15)

For Turkish business people, the main idea is that nobody does business with an end in mind and there could always be another opportunity to do business with your partner.

You never know when you might need some business partners. If we did not want them, we would not have started the business relationship in the first place. (Respondent 3)

Because of Turkey's geopolitical situation and fast changing agenda, Turkish businesspersons are forced to think like this. In 2016, they lost their main markets because of political problems in countries such as Libya, Tunisia and, in particular, Russia. With the flight crisis, which sat the Turkish army near the Turkey/Syria border shoot down a Russian aircraft, Russia retaliated by introducing several sanctions against Turkey and Turkish companies. Turkish business people were therefore unable to do business with Russia at the point of data collection; although all participants stated that before the crisis, business was good. Nevertheless,

We never terminate a business relationship, we just freeze the relationship. In my personal life as well, I never terminate any relationship. (Respondent 12)

When business gets to this point, it means any problems with business partners are easily solved. We still look for new business opportunities but, sometimes, external factors may affect us, like the Russian flight crisis, with Russian sanctions against Turkish products. This affected our business relationship, especially because we could not send our product to

Russia and we had to freeze the business relationship. However, this is a very rare case, and in the most problematic times, but I believe this crisis will be solved. In my 60 years of business experience, I saw many crises and they were always solved. (Respondent 11)

Another reason that participants gave for non-termination was the cost:

In our industry after investing money and spending a lot of time to make a relationship work with a potential business partner, nobody wants to end the relationship. (Respondent 13)

While Turkish business people do not accept business relationship termination, some growth stages models do include an ending, although they do not offer any deep explanation (Andersen, 2001; Chang and Lin 2008; Conway and Swift 2000; White 2000; Kaunonen, 2010). Normally, however, there is no termination stage because no business relationship aims or plans for the short term; rather than terminating a relationship, businesses prefer to stabilise, freeze or deactivate it (Das and Teng, 2002; Polonsky, Beldona and Schuppisser, 2003). Few researchers mention a permanent ending in which the actors never see each other or hate each other. Zineldin (2002) compares this to a divorce in which couples still love and respect each other, while Borch (1984) continues the honeymoon metaphor and Andersen and Kumar (2006) prefers to talk of reestablishment. Much like the Turkish business people, Ford et al. (2003) consider that relationship cannot be terminated although it might be put on hold when business is slow.

An alternative point of consideration which may explain the stance employed by Turks when it comes to business is their underlying culture. As noted by Hofstede (1980), highly collectivist cultures value social networks and relationships. Society thus relies on close cooperation and harmony between various groups and stakeholders. These societies also prefer to avoid conflict and thus 'ending' or terminating a relationship may be an alien concept to them.

5.4 Factors Influencing Business Relationships

When interviewees were questioned about factors that have an impact on business relationships, they agreed on trust, commitment, communication/information sharing, and satisfaction with financial payments, language competence and other cultural features, as being those that held the most weight. These factors are analysed in the following sections to

provide evidence of which directly or indirectly affect the business relationship development with other companies, and the extent to which these are positive or negative.

Participants' answers provided an in-depth insight into the research question and allowed for the identification of seven main factors:

- Trust

- Commitment

- Communication

- Adaptation

- Satisfaction

- Cultural factors, including religion and language.

5.4.1. Trust

Trust emerged as being one of the most prominent factors mentioned throughout all interviews. As interviewees overwhelmingly indicated its importance in the success and progression of a business relationship. However, although agreeing that trust is fundamental, the interviewees perceived it differently. For example, 13 Respondent 13 saw it as necessary

For myself to feel comfortable to do business with someone without any concern about his or her liability; it makes us more confident to do business and take risk.

Respondent 20 added,

When I feel comfortable with someone, I can trust that they will benefit the business ...Confidence means, for me that he will keep his promises and pay on time.

It is clear that, from the perspective of Turkish business people, trust is about confidence in their business partner. For some, this confidence may be related to financial capabilities and keeping to their commitments.

Feeling confident, for myself, is their payments coming on time ... (Respondent 15)

Some participants simply saw trust as being honest. Respondent 13 claimed:

Trust is believing your business partner and being honest in every condition. That makes you close with your business partners.

For Respondent 9 it was directly related with experience with his business partner.

It is something business partners obtain after years of doing business with each other. It is based on their experience of each other.

Respondent 11 related trust with emotion:

Trust is personal; something emotional that is to do with your business partner's attitude and your experience together.

Some respondents claimed that being honest, keeping your word and keeping an agreement according to the contract are qualities of a person you can trust.

If my business partner can keep their promises and is honest, that is enough to trust them. (Respondent 18)

The above statements show that trust involves being honest and feeling confident in the abilities of partners, which is directly related to financial duties, accomplishing tasks and past experience of acting on those responsibilities. All this requires time and patience to be developed.

Having defined what trust meant to the participants, we will now move on to discuss how trust starts and grows. Respondent stated that the level of trust from the beginning is neutral or zero.

We start contacting someone, our feelings towards him or her are neutral; we try to be fair and we do not have any prejudice. (Respondent 21)

It is interesting to note that trust was in no part influenced or improved by cultural factors. The interviewees did not associate trust with any specific values or cultures and instead relied on behaviour as a measure of trust. This adds an interesting contribution to the on-going debate surrounding cultural distance and the extent to which this is truly observable. It may be that Nguyen and Nguyen (2014) and De Mooij's (2018) assertion hold true in this context as cultural sensitivity is said to improve business relationships as opposed to simply relying on cultural distance.

Although trust is the key element, it is can be difficult to set up and build in a business relationship. Trust takes years, beginning with one transaction and increasing with subsequent transactions.

When you do business long term you can understand if your business partner is serious or just playing you. (Respondent 23)

Of the many ways to build trust, the main one is to ensure that obligations and duties are fulfilled. Sometimes it is good to send an item before payment, to indicate to partners that they are trusted

One of our customers from the Middle East pays in cash. He always brings money and when we count it, it is always more than what we agreed. When we correct it later on, we realise that it is his way of evaluating people to trust in business. (Respondent 14)

However, some participants claimed that the way trust grows is dependent on their potential business partner's situation. At the beginning of the relationship, a seller will have two primary concerns: will this buyer pay the money, and will they promote our products successfully. When these two problems are solved, trust will start to grow, and the relationship will develop.

If the potential candidate is financially strong and has a good reputation in their market, we just consider the products side. This positive attitude allows us to take some risks in the beginning of a relationship. (Respondent 24)

Trust grows throughout the critical start and development stages, increasing between parties and strengthening the relationship between them. Once the continue stage in a business relationship is reached, the level of trust is strong between both parties, making everything easier and allowing relationship to develop quickly.

When both parties trust each other, they are more likely to tolerate each other's mistakes. This makes the business relationship very strong and durable to crisis, whether these are encountered at market or political level.

We are doing business with one of our customers for a long time and one time we had a problem with our raw material, which we did not realise. Our customer informed us of the problem with the product and we sent them a new one. However, there was still a problem and the customer had to call us again. They told us, because we have known each other for such a long time, we will continue working with you but please make sure about the quality and compensate our loss. When doing long-term business with someone, you can trust him or her more because you have experience with them. (Respondent 4)

Respondent 17 supported this idea:

When I trust the customer, it breaks down the majority of the barriers between us but to trust someone is not easy, we generally begin by considering the partner as a risk. If our customer is financially capable of compensating for any losses, or if they have a good reputation, we do not think they will try to betray our trust.

Both of the previous statements describe trust as a way of solving problems, which might occur between business partners or companies. At the same time, when both parties trust each other, they have very few problems. In other words, trust is a problem solver and it makes a relationship stronger. Therefore, trust is a vital component in a long-term business relationship.

Interestingly, Participant 21 claimed that trust is a factor that gives hope to both parties in times of crisis. For example, in the plane crisis between Turkey and Russia many international partnerships were damaged or lost. The Respondent claimed that, in their case, the strong level of trust between the companies' means that they will whether the storm of the crisis and l wait it out, in the hopes of resuming their business relationship in the future.

Because of the crisis, we have lost one of our major companies to do business with, which has affected us a lot and we have lost a lot of money. However, because we trust our Russian business partner and have been doing business with them for so long, we hope to restart the relationship once this political problem has been solved.

Due to its importance in business relationships, building trust requires care and patience. It is especially difficult if one does not possess any experience of the country and no other business as a reference. The first order and following orders can be seen as trials.

To gain business partner trust is critical to success in business relationship and it is a way to enter directly in their business markets. (Respondent 11)

According to the interviewees, the main reason why trust was always mentioned first is that a business relationship cannot exist without it; it is a fundamental factor for both parties, without which they would just have a one-off business transaction. They claimed that strong trust between partners in the early stages makes the relationship grow faster and means that partners are more willing to take risks and make investments early on.

When we trust our customer, we are willing to take a risk .... We trust them in our research if the company in their home country is in a very strong position and financially ok. They do not think short term; therefore, we send them the item before they have paid to show our trust. (Respondent 21)

The quotations above can be summarised into four key points:

- Trusting your potential business partner starts from the outset but the level of trust can differ from person to person
- A high level of trust makes you closer to your business partner
- The level of trust increases with business transactions
- Establishing trust is not easy and requires time and patience.

The literature supports these findings: the trust level between supplier and customer extends the life of the business relationship (Martin and Sohi, 1993; Mitchell et al., 1998) ; trust is related to keeping promises (Ganesan, 1994) ; trust requires social effort and bonding (Håkansson and Ford, 2002), experience (Harridge-March, 2006) and good communication (Fritz and Fischer, 2007); individual trust is the key to building organisational trust (Svensson, 2004); and mutual goals, such as market penetration or making more profit, increase trust (Cannon and William, 1999).

5.4.2. Commitment

In all the interviews, commitment was highlighted as a factor where successful business relationships were concerned., Communication was cited as being key to helping build trust between partners. Commitment reflects the partners' character and personality, the most important criteria being honesty and showing a desire to do business.

Again, each participant defined commitment differently, although they agreed that it is the desire to build, develop and maintain a relationship. Respondent 19 suggested that commitment is

A *willingness to make a business relationship with your partner*

In addition, Respondent 5 that it is about:

Making promises and keeping them.

For Turkish business people, there is thus a significant correlation between commitment, confirmed by keeping promises, and trust; commitment is a way of demonstrating trust. Respondent 10 claimed that:

If you want to trust someone to do business, you have to consider if he has kept his promises in the past: punctuality, payment on time.

And Respondent 19 that

Commitment is the key element to trust someone. In other words, you can trust someone once you know he keeps his promises.

Commitment is a way of keeping partners happy and maintaining the business relationship:

When you start doing business, your partner's actions towards you are very important. You need to judge how they act, how they keep promises. If your partner keeps their word, even for small things, then you can trust them and try to start doing business because those kinds of actions make you close. (Respondent 18)

In the beginning of the relationship, the supplier is mainly responsible for commitment, making all the promises. This allows the relationship to develop and reach the continue stage where commitment is at a very high level and both parties commit to each other. In the start stages, commitment is neutral or low:

When you want to start a business relationship, you look at your partner's actions thus far: if he has kept his promises, if he has contacted us as discussed and if payments have been received on time. Payment is the most important commitment in a business relationship. (Participant 13)

In the development stage commitment increases:

When you complete your first business order and you begin to increase the trade volume, keeping promises is key because business is growing with the increase in commitment. (Respondent 10)

In the continue stage, commitment is very high:

When you reach a stable and routine level of business relationship with your partner, you think you can trust their promises. Payment does not have to be received before the items are sent or vice versa; this shows that each party trusts the other to keep their promises. (Respondent 21)

Increasing or decreasing commitment results in mutual benefit and business success. Spending social time together further increases the commitment level between both parties. Once they know each other personally, they can understand each other very well.

When you go for dinner or do something other than work with your business partner, you get to know each other better. Therefore, we trust each other and our commitment to each other becomes stronger because we know when our customer says something, he will do it. (Respondent 12)

In summary, commitment is a key factor in developing the relationship between buyer and seller. It was reported to be the second most important factor, after trust. In the beginning, one party may be slow to commit, but with increasing transactions, and increased trust, the willingness to commit also grows.

Anderson (2001) similarly stressed that commitment means willingness to do business, and keeping promises, either through payment on time or by visiting each other. Other authors stress the need for consistency and continuity of commitment (Dwyer et al. 1987; Wetzels, Ruyter and Birgelen, 1998; Cater and Zabkar, 2009).

Similar to our own findings, commitment is initially low but increases as the relationship develops (Anderson, 2001; Chang and Lin, 2008; Andersen and Kumar, 2006); the stronger the personal relationship, the greater the commitment (Andersen and Kumar 2006).

5.4.3. Communication/information sharing

All participants commented on the importance of communication in drawing business partners closer and allowing for open dialogue. Respondent 17 noted that

Good communication with a business partner is the way of showing that you have a good relationship. If you call your business partner often, that means you are very close with them.

All business deals can incur problems. Good communication helps reduce the distance and remove barriers between partners.

When we have any problem with our business partners, communication helps to solve them. One time we sent a product to our customer but there was a problem with this product. They communicated with us and sent pictures of the products – the good thing about their behaviour is that they used very polite language. (Respondent 23)

This shows that communication, like trust, can be a problem solver.

Respondent 15 stated that communication is a vital key in the first transaction; it helps to understand your business partner. Good communication reduces errors and increases productivity between both parties.

In the beginning of the relationship, you need to communicate with your customer very well, especially in first business order. You need to communicate with your business partner very effectively.

Another advantage of good communication is that it increases cooperation and harmony between the parties. Through communication, both explain themselves well and understand the opposite partner's demands and desires. As a result, the business relationship will flourish, and sales volume will increase. Respondent 15 again:

When you communicate with your business partner openly, it helps you to explain yourselves clearly: what you expect, how you expect it, what your main aim in this relationship is, and when they talk freely about their aim and objectives. We can make a clear view and road map about business relationship.

The communication style starts formally and moves to the informal, as relationship develops. A formal relationship means speaking with the partner during working hours, through email, and using their official title. With informal communication, both parties feel free to speak with their partner at any time, through social apps or direct messages; this may or may not be about work.

Sometimes, the process of moving from formal to informal in a relationship depends on the partners; if they are open to communication at any time, without barriers, it encourages informality.

Sometimes we can be very quick with our business partner. If they want to, you can give them your phone number and send you a message rather than work, using a friendly title. We can see that this informal communication shows you are very close and sincere. (Respondent 19)

Respondent 14 suggested that good way to measure the relationship level between business partners is the formality of their speech. For example, using formal language is professional and informal language is friendly.

In the beginning of a relationship, we keep our distance and use formal language with our business partner. We send all documents by email, we ask for their office number and working hours. Sometime later, we improve our relationship and use freer language. We use formal language when being professional and informal when being friends.

However, most respondents stated that this transition from formal to informal depends on individuals:

*Some customers want to keep their distance and do not want to become close to us. At this point, good communication is essential to try to reduce this distance. (*Respondent 19)

Most companies, whether communication is informal or formal, prefer all orders and official requests to be in email format.

We prefer all orders and official demands and requests through an email. We try to archive them. It helps if we have any problems. (Respondent 15)

Respondent 19 noted that, although many partners like to keep traditional formal ways of storing information and documenting business, the methods of communication used between partners could become very familiar, with communication through messaging applications for ease and speed.

The relationship and communication with a company begins by email, phone-to-phone calling, and face-to-face meetings; these are very important to explain themselves. It is preferred that all orders and official documents through mail. However, sales people and office staff communicate with social apps such as WhatsApp, Viber, Skype or Team Viewer. Meetings with video conferencing are particularly popular.

The advantages of communication naturally give rise to the potential of miscommunication, which acts as a barrier between business partners and slows the progress of a healthy business relationship.

Information sharing is the result of good communication and trust between parties; if the customer shares private information about the target market, their market, or their sales, it means they trust their partner.

When we entered the Polish market, we spent a lot of time getting to know our business partner, but they still did not trust us enough. After completing some business transactions and gaining their trust, they began to share information about their company and the market position. For some countries, this information is not important, but in Poland, it is essential. (Respondent 13)

In summary, communication is a key factor for a healthy relationship and survival during a crisis. More communication means solving problems and ensuring that the relationship develops quickly.

The importance of language competence will be analysed in a later section.

The literature supports our findings on communication/information sharing, as a problem solver and making the business partnership closer (Conway and Swift 2000; Ford et al., 2003), throughout all stages of relationship development (Fontenot, Vlosky, Wilson and Wilson, 1998), with a positive impact on trust and commitment (Paulraj, Lado and Chen, 2008; Nyaga et al., 2010; Anastasiadis and Poole, 2015) and according to the type of communication (Fontenot *et al.*, 1998).

Interestingly, our participants never mentioned the communication skills and performance of sales personnel, nor the stress involved in solving problems between business partners (Zolkiewski, 2004). Edvinson (1985) also notes that the change from formal to informal communication in a borderless relationship depends on the culture and personality of the business partners. Voldnes (2015) discusses this from the perspective of Russian business people; her conclusion that once they trust their business partner, they will share market and company details is similar to our own findings. Interestingly however, the respondents acknowledge that changing nature of communication i.e. formal to informal, being contingent on the personality of the individual as noted by Edvinson (1985). That said however culture was not acknowledged. Hofstede (1980) highlights how communication preferences differ from culture to culture however this is not explicitly noted by the Turkish participants. Instead they consistently highlight personality as a factor. This is also interesting when taking into account a summary of the findings presented in the previous chapter. For example,

answers to question 3 provide evidence into the role culture plays when it comes to communication. The participants show a slight preference of their European partners who are direct and enter the relationship with contracts and explicitly agreements as to roles and expectations. Arab business partners on the other hand are said to adopt a more informal, casual 'friendship' based approach.

This is an interesting element of the research findings and echoes the discussions previously presented on low vs high context communication and culture. To recap, high context cultures tend to focus on developing closer relationships; information is implied and seldom explicit (Hall, 1976). Countries such as those in the Arab Gulf, i.e. Saudi Arabia and Oman would be regarded as high context cultures (Hofstede et al., 2002). Fewer rules tend to be in place where communication is concerned, and considerable importance is granted to communication and loyalty. Low context cultures explicitly communicate all necessary information, rules and structure are followed closely and short-term relationships tend to be the norm (Hall, 1976). This approach is common to European countries such as Germany and the UK. Interestingly, being a collectivist society, Turkey is largely regarded as being a high context culture (Hofstede Insights, 2018); despite this however they show a preference for business partners from low context cultures. Positioning this within the 'cultural distance' phenomenon, it seems that thus far, the relationship between cultural distance and business relations are inverse. The closer the culture is i.e. high context cultures such as Arab partners or neighbouring Iran, the more challenging that these relationships are considered. Cultures which are more distant and 'lower' or individualist, i.e. Germans, are instead preferred.

The above development may be due to the importance placed on trust- perhaps the explicit communication style adopted by European businesses inspires Turkish partners with more confidence. Whilst the respondents did not explicitly or implicitly trust one group of partners more than the other, they did highlight the importance of communication and how this is the bedrock of a successful relationship. The Germans were praised for their use of contracts and this was preferred to the Arab method of 'friendship'. From this it can be inferred that low context cultures quickly provide the foundations upon which a successful business relationship can be built upon, at least as far as Turkish businesses are concerned.

5.4.4. Adaptation

Adaptation emerges as a very important variable mentioned by participants, either in directly or indirectly. Adaptation was regarded as being vital to start a business relationship with potential business partners:

When u start a relationship, you need to understand market and customer demand also customer behaviour therefore we need to adapt our sales team to commination what with them in different way, for example to speak with them different time and communication methods and understand their countries situation. (Respondent 11)

As mentioned within the above statements, adaption remains a major factor within the business relationship. This was also highlighted within the literature by Brennan and Turnbull, (1999); and Canning and Brennan (2004). These authors claim adaption is vital in business relationship.

Adaption takes many forms and goes beyond market demands to include partner preference such as communication, payment options and meetings. Payment adaptation was also crucial given that these can cause a strain on relations due to the differences in financial infrastructure and political environments of business partner countries.

Our major markets is Iraq because of country`s unstable political conditions our customer payment way always changing, another ways is shipment ways and styles, we always adapt ourselves for political situation, (Respondent 8)

Adaptation is making product for potential countries market requirements:

especially when we are manufacturing textile and clothes you need to arrange their consumer behaviour and fashion styles. Otherwise our products cannot sell. (Respondent 7)

Adaption can be communication styles as well:

Communication styles and types shows different by customer to customer some customer prefer formal communication and others prefer close and friendly, we adapt ourselves

according to their attitudes. This helps us to understand each other very well and communicate well. (Respondent 16)

Adaption is vital

They are our business partners and business customers therefore we need to adapt ourselves for their demand as ultimately, we benefit from this as they prolong contact with us and our business relationship continues.

The findings suggest that adaptation is linked to cultural understanding and awareness; this remains a crucial element of cross-cultural business relations. At the very onset of a business relationship, partners are not familiar with the preferences of another, nor do the SMEs inherently know of expectations relating to communication preferences, shipment expectations, information sharing preferences etc. Adaptation thus determine success as far as the respondents were concerned.

When you start to know your customer and market you have a no experience for target country therefore, adaptation is very vital its start with first customer how he wants to communicate and how he wants to product and shipment, when you adapt yourself to their communication style and information sharing business goes very smoothly. I have some customer they want information to reach me anytime, I very open to them. Another customer prefers email contact for everything and official contracts to protect their right. We are able to adapt to these preferences, this flexibility helps us to start a business with them.

This echoes the assertions put forth by Viio and Grönroos, (2016) who claimed that good communication in business relationships is predicated on the ability to adapt and cater to the needs and demand of customers.

This statement is further supported within literature by both Canning and Brennan (2004);.and Román and Iacobucci (2010). Both sets of authors add that without adaptation of product and services, it will be impossible to flourish within markets, international or otherwise.

Hallen et al., (1988) and Hallen et al. (1991) state that adaption is crucial to stabilising the business relationship; this was further echoed within the findings as Turkish business people also claimed that this is vital for business relationships, both future and present. This is evidenced in statements such as

When u adapt with your business partner cultural and try to understand their religious issues, its helps to create better business relationships also it makes us very closer.

Voldnes (2014) also attests to this and provides empirical evidence from the Norwegian fisheries sector to support his point. He adds that companies who adapted culturally in Norway, were said to be more successful in the long-term.

5.4.5. Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is directly related to profitability for the seller, which is performance related, and the majority of interviewees agreed that satisfaction on both sides is directly related to performance management.

Satisfaction can be two-sided. We have to satisfy our customer and our customer has to satisfy us; this could be related to price, product margin, and the quality of the products, discounts, or updates about product development. (Respondent 15)

Respondent 12 commented that satisfaction involves:

The total experience of a business partner in their business relationship.

Thus, satisfaction is also related to information sharing, as discussed above. Participants primarily discussed information sharing as a key factor in the development of business relationships, noting that when both parties are open and share information about their market positions or customer behaviour, you can develop more products successfully.

*When we are entering into business in one market, your partner's openness or willingness to share information about their company or the market you want to penetrate gives you more advantage to understand your customer's demands. Some countries, such as Russia are not willing to share information about their market level and company`s market share until they are very satisfied with your company. On the other hand, when you go to European countries or some African countries, they are quite happy to share everything about their sales and company policy. (*Respondent 7)

Information sharing is one way of establishing trust between business partners. For some countries, this means sharing personal information, which is a result of a satisfactory business

relationship. In addition, satisfying customers cements the possibility of a customer returning and the beginning of a new relationship.

Information sharing is the way to be open in a business relationship and make people trust your business. If your customer is withholding some information from you that means they do not trust you or they have an alternate supplier. (Respondent 15)

When partners are satisfied with their business relationship, they become more open to each other and share information. Some things they share maybe unimportant in one country but significant in another. Thus, in some countries, satisfaction is business oriented and in other countries it is about personal relationships.

The main aim in business relationships is profit and penetration of the business market. This is where ensuring business satisfaction is key; when business partners are happy with the relationship, they are satisfied with it. For Turkish business people, satisfaction is relative; they see business satisfaction as a high level of trust, sustainable business volume, and profit. Satisfaction can be profit- and performance-oriented. Respondent 18 explained:

For us, if our business partner's performance is good ... Good means if they sell well and promote our product in the market, both sides make a good profit and that is what satisfaction means for us.

In summary, satisfaction is necessary to the success and development of a business relationship.

It relates to the whole experience of one company's relationship with another, from start to finish. When the parties are satisfied, they become more open and willing to do business together.

The literature concentrates on satisfaction as mainly profit- and performance-related (Cannon et al., 2010; Anderson and Mittal, 2000), and differences in satisfaction can be related to performance (Hunt and Nevin, 1974; Skarmeas and Robson, 2008). Unsatisfactory partners are likely to terminate the business relationship (Hunt and Nevin 1974). As in our findings, satisfaction is linked by many researchers with trust and commitment (Mehta et al.,2006). Strong and positive satisfaction, the result of total positive experience throughout all stages of the business, leads to strong customer loyalty (Dwyer et al., 1987; Anderson and Mittal, 2000; Kanuonen, 2010; Voldnes, 2015). Again, like our findings, Voldnes (2015) linked satisfaction with information sharing to build a strong business relationship. Customer

willingness and openness is a way to the supplier's satisfaction with the business relationship (Kumar et al., 1995).

5.4.6. Cultural Factors

Although the conditions for doing business are the same everywhere, the manner of doing business differs across the world. Culture is therefore a key element for understanding people and how they manage their actions with others. Cross-cultural business activities are the heart of the international business, thus any company engaging in international business needs to consider cultural factors. In the interviews, respondents stressed the importance of culture, whether directly or indirectly, in their relationships with their business partners.

Turkey's location and cultural interaction with many nations brings many advantages in international business. Turkish business people are well aware that cultural sensitivity is important in understanding business partners.

Many of our participants noted the influence of culture on the development of a business relationship. The key areas influenced by culture are:

- Doing business

- Building a relationship

- Factors influencing different cultures

- Religion.

5.4.6.1 Doing business

 Preferences for conducting business differs depending on the nation under investigation. Having an understanding and appreciation of this is crucial to succeeding in international business (De Mooij, 2018). Developing such as business relationship therefore requires a great deal of patience and tolerance. Respondent 17 claimed that doing business with other nations is not easy to and involves many challenges:

With all my experience, I can say that if you want to do business with other nations you should be patient and optimistic. Explaining yourself and understanding those takes time and is not easy.

Some cultures do not talk about business straight away, this is considered to be rude and inappropriate. The suggestion is that relationships take precedence thus one should honour their partner and get to know them first as opposed to viewing them as a means to an end-money (Hofstede et al., 2010). Instead, it is customary to spend an adequate amount of time chatting and acquainting oneself with their partners. However, other cultures get down to business more quickly. For this reason, the time it takes to start business relationship differs from country to country.

When we work with European countries or the USA, they start business directly in meetings so we can get to the point easily and directly. In particular, Germans are very good at this; like when they play football, they go directly to the goal. On the contrary, when we go to the Middle East, we go to dinner and eat before we talk business. (Respondent 19)

Thus, starting and building up of a business relationship requires different time schedules depending on the culture. In particular, establishing a relationship for the first time in a new country can either save or consume time and money according to the local business culture.

For Europe, short visits solve our problems and we can sort out business but some countries sometimes we do not know how many days we need to solve this problem. (Respondent 13)

Therefore, the cost of starting a business is different in every nation.

This serves as evidence when looking to prove the importance of developing cultural intelligence or competence as possessing a cultural awareness allows one to plan in advance and be aware of how much time it is likely to take, knowing whether meetings will be direct or indirect etc. This need to consider cultural differences when planning meetings abroad thus affects time management.

Respondent 15 claimed that valuing time is an example of something that differs from nation to nation; this normally means that some are less punctual.

When I go to the seaside or to hot counties, they are so relaxed and do not pay attention to time. For meetings when they promise to meet you at a certain time, they come a minimum of 20 minutes late. On the other hand, some nations, like European or Scandinavian countries, come to meetings on time.

Respondent 14 added that this is true not only of business meetings; even socialising time is not easy to arrange in some countries.

I hate to wait in the hotel lobby for our business partners to come and go dinner.

Another issue raised by several interviewees was that the effect of business legislation on starting a business varies from country to country.

Sometimes, because of our product quality check and legislation, we spend so much money and time to get the certificates that we require to start business. Therefore, it is very important to find a partner who knows a lot about customs and legal advice if you are working with the Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries because it is very difficult in these countries. (Respondent 21)

This also shows the importance not offending the right business partner who has the ability to solve legal and customs problems in the target country's market. This ability can directly affect the choice of partner in some countries.

When we choose a business partner, we look at their history and their position in their country. If they have been doing business for a long time, and import and export a lot, that means they know the process and can help solve customs and legal problems. A company is 70% more likely to choose a business partner with these qualities. (Respondent 17)

Selection of the best candidate and partner in business is so important that cultural aspects such as flexibility to customer demands play a large role:

When we try to find our international business customers, culture is very important. Every nation has a different business mentality and way of doing business with our customers. In the Middle East, it is very different to start business; in some cultures, such as in the Middle East and North Africa they always want special requirements. For example, we sell products in Algeria and they want to put a special sticker on the product that shows the product origin. (Respondent 5)

Respondent 18 added that every nation has different requirements from its suppliers:

European customers look at your financial capability and your history; what this company has accomplished and references. They ask you about delivery time and it is so important for them to give this customer service. On the opposite side, these criteria are important to Russians, but they are mainly looking for someone to trust.

Participant 13 confirmed that to do business, service and quality is not enough. The criterion with some nations is trust. Therefore, socialising with potential business partners is very

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important. This social time spent with a business partner, generally dining together, allows the company to get to know their potential business candidate.

In China and Russia, they want to know you and want to be friends with you before they start business with you. Otherwise, they do not start business with you or develop business with you. In China, spending time with them, giving them gifts and going out to dinner is very important.

A number of the participants claimed that in some countries, companies want to secure every part of the business relationship starting with an official agreement. On the other hand, some nations prefer only a verbal agreement because, for them, words are more important than writing.

In the beginning, European business people want everything on paper and to make sure everything is secure with agreement. On the contrary, customers from the Middle East want to do business in their way; for them a promise is more important than a written agreement. (Respondent 9)

Respondent 8 added that, in some countries, being referred by someone is the best way of starting a business relationship:

When you do business, you need the right person or network to do business with in another country. For example, when we do business in Russia, we ask our relative's company be a referee for us. This helps us very much.

In summary, the Turkish respondents emerge as being very astute when it comes to preferences and norms of other cultures. What is even more interesting that in keeping with Nguyen and Nguyen (2014), Turkish firms appeared to have already noted and found coping means when it comes to cultural preferences and issues. It appears that the respondents are well aware of cultural differences and the various areas or dimension which are responsible for these differences i.e. context, collectivism etc. They may not be familiar with the theoretical terms, though they very much have an understanding of these and are aware of how to address any challenges these may bring.

Hofstede (1980, 2002) adds that collectivist cultures are characterised by the importance they place on convergence; Schwartz (1994), Smith et al (1996), and Keillor and Hult's (1999) add that such cultures deeply value harmony and social order. The interviews cast light upon this and reveal this to be true, at least where Turkey is concerned. The participants reveal

that the sector within Turkey is characterised by a high amount of interaction and recommendations form the backbone of any pre-business relationship stages. It is here, during this stage that the respondents appear to be informed of the differences in culture before being advised how to address and overcome such issues. This assumption is based on Hult's (1999) dimension of loyal involvement/utilitarian involvement, whereby collectivist societies wiling seek out information which will be beneficial to the group. Group thinking dictates that the needs of others are placed above the individual. Social harmony is thus a constant ideal and one which all members of society work towards (Hofstede 1984, 1991, and 2001).

Collectivist cultures also tend to have high levels of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1984)- this may be an additional driver in the Turkish respondents' abilities to develop cultural sensitivity and manage business relationships regardless of cultural factors. Evidence for this can further be found in the statements offered by one participant who adds that they anticipate a range of opportunities from China in the near future. To prepare for this, the participant had already signed his son up for lessons in Mandarin to prepare for future business dealings. This casts light into the thinking process of Turkish business owners. They readily accept that culture matters and shapes business practices and attitudes and are very willing to accommodate partners as a result. The issues that do affect Turkish businesses include time management and legislation- incidentally two factors that they simply cannot prepare for nor control.

5.4.6.2 Business Meetings

The most pertinent cultural differences in business meetings are time, discussion style, interaction patterns, and being direct/indirect in dealing with problems.

Respondent 7 suggested that time is very important in business meetings.

For some nations, you should tell them exactly when you want to meet them, such as Europeans, especially Germans. They want to know three weeks in advance. On the other hand, in Middle Eastern countries and the Mediterranean business, meetings are very flexible, and you can arrange them at short notice.

Respondent 17 claimed that the manner of business partners is different in each country, so understanding their culture and habits is very important in communicating well with them.

Sometimes in meetings, people can use an accusing manner, but we are just patient and try to understand our business partners and to develop a good relationship with them. Although it is very challenging and difficult, after getting to know each other, you solve your problems and understand each other very well.

Respondent 14, for example, explained that the procedure in meetings depends on the relationship between both parties; meetings can be formal or informal. In addition, calling your business partner by a title or name and the formality of greetings is another complex point. If the meeting time includes special days, such as Ramadan for Muslim people or Easter for Eastern European countries, the meeting schedule is different.

When we arrange meetings, we need to organise our time very carefully. We are Muslim, so in Ramadan, we fast, but it does not decrease our performance; our companies work as normal. However, in the Middle East organising a meeting is very difficult. In addition, your behaviour during the meeting and calling clients by their formal title is important.

Religious days and long holiday periods in target countries affect business and should be considered when planning meetings.

When you arrange meetings with business partners during the Christmas period, they are already in a holiday mood. Because of this, meetings are sometimes not beneficial and after experiencing this, we prefer to arrange our meetings after New Year. (Respondent 11)

Respondent 25 noted that the agenda would be chosen carefully. Some nations want to discuss the main topic or issue straight away, while others prefer general information before approaching the main concerns.

When you arrange meetings, each culture has a different way of talking. For example, Germans often speak louder than others do and if they do not want something, they say no directly. On the contrary, some nations cannot say no directly, they have to say yes. When we started business with one Japanese company, they said yes to everything, but afterwards we realised that "yes" really means "no".

Choice of the staff sent to meetings to represent the company is important. Respondents claimed that in meetings, social hierarchy plays a key role as it shows the level of the companies' respect for each other.

Another issue about meetings is sending the right staff. Asian companies want to meet with the higher level of staff as this shows them your respect. They also want to meet the owner or

manager. On the contrary, European companies want so see staff that are most relevant to the topic of the meeting and they do not mind as much about meeting high-level staff. (Respondent 18)

To summarise, the concerns raised in planning international business meeting are time, content, the way of discussing topics, the level of formality, and holiday schedules.

5.4.6.3 Communication style

One interesting cultural difference raised by interviewees is communication style. Communication is a way of explaining yourself and your feelings, so an understanding of cultural differences is vital. The key cultural differences in communication style are tone of voice, invasion of personal space and use of body language.

Some nations like to speak louder and use a lot of body language and this can seem like they are trying to fight with you, especially in Arab countries. In Asia, they like to speak calmly and Americans and Western Europeans, especially Germans, speak calmly and directly. (Respondent 4)

In cross-cultural interaction, judging the right amount of personal space to give your business partner is important to ensure they are comfortable. Turkish business people commented on how important it is to maintain a safe distance and rely on body language to show their expressions. However, other cultures have different ideas of personal space.

Our Arab business partners like to sit closer to us and speak loudly and touch our body when they speak. For them, it is a normal way to show trust in communication. On the contrary, Europeans like to put a distance between you, normally more than 30 cm, and speak in a normal tone and prefer to talk; they only shake hands when the meeting starts or finishes. However, this kind of interaction can be related to personal behaviour, how someone might be as a person. For example, maybe they do not like to touch people or get closer when they communicate. (Respondent 5)

Another topic is shaking hands, greeting, and kissing if it is necessary.

When you start a relationship, especially the initial point of contact with potential business partners, when you enter the room if there is a woman you need to be careful. Who can you can shake hands with or kiss all depends on the culture? I prefer to put distance between us and arrange myself according to my business partner's attitude. (Respondent 11)

Another difference in communication is listening. According to our participants, in Turkish culture when your partner is speaking, intervening is an easy way of showing that you are listening. However, this attitude maybe seen as rude in European cultures. Instead, eye contact and non-verbal communication are a way of showing respect to business partners and indicating that you are listening to them.

I have learned to listen to my business partner until they have finished their speech. Because I was told by my business partner, when we became friends that to interrupt is very disrespectful. (Respondent 11)

Respondent 1, for example, added that family relationships must be considered, especially whom you are allowed to speak to and the tone of voice you can use with certain family members. Sensitivity here ensures that the listener is not disrespect in any way.

You need to be careful when you direct interaction with your business partners especially for their family. With some nations, you cannot raise your voice to older family members, and you cannot communicate with their wife.

Some cultures prefer to not speak of their personal lives, including family. Asian and Middle Eastern cultures like to talk about their children, but not their wives or daughters over the age of 18. This is understandable for Turkish business people because it is similar to Turkish culture.

At a more distant level:

When looking at advertising, we need to make sure we consider the target country's national holidays and religious events. It is very important, for example, when we put offers on food and we need to understand consumer behaviour, when people spend more money, buy gifts and consume food etc. (Respondent 16)

Gestures also differ from nation to nation and understanding what these non-verbal signs mean is very important. One participant described an embarrassing situation at a business dinner with his Italian business partner. He wanted to express satisfaction with his meal and did this with a typical Turkish gesture; unfortunately, this gesture has quite the opposite meaning in Italy and his partner was taken aback.

4.4.6.4 Meeting socially

Cultural differences are often exposed when you spend time with your partner socially. Talking about non-work issues and spending time after meetings or at dinner makes people relax and feel closer to each other. Respondent 16 noted that this time gives business partners the chance to get to know each other well.

With men, the best way is to talk about sport, especially if he is interested in football. We talk about European football teams or talk basketball, mainly American NBA. To have the same hobbies and pleasures makes business people closer or feel friendly.

However, Respondent 2 added that even in social time there are some boundaries that should not be crossed; taboo subjects especially include politics and religion.

Some nations do not like to speak politics, especially Middle Eastern and Chinese. However, Europeans like to speak about it sometimes and Latin Americans do like it. It is also a way of showing their trust if they like to speak about political issues.

Socially, business partners are invited to meet family members or visiting their home as a way of showing trust and respect in Middle Eastern and Asian countries. In Europe and America, they are less likely to be invited into their homes.

*When we visit our business partner, he invites us to dinner at his house to show his feelings towards us. We spend time with him, and he introduces us to his family. We feel very welcome. (*Respondent 8)

The findings have shown that meeting socially and spending time with partners make relationship stronger and valuable for partners. Several studies shown that such as Guanxi (social obligation); Wilson (1995), social relationship developing; Dwyer et, al. (1987) to increase business, and Abosag (2015) claimed to make enhance trust.

5.4.6.5 Advantages of Turkish culture and location

During the interviews, participants pointed out that being Turkish provides three strong advantages informing close relationships with foreign business partners:

1.   Having a European life style but being Muslim and living in both Asian and European cultures.

2.   When we go to do business deals, dressing like Europeans gives us an advantage as we are seen to be like them. Being Muslim also helps us to understand the special requirements of Muslim countries; our using Islamic terms makes them feel comfortable.

3.   The trade fairs in Istanbul have many advantages because of the city's location; the visa regulations are not too complicated, helping potential customers to attend the fairs.

Trade fairs operating in Istanbul are very beneficial for us. Many customers from African countries come to Turkey to see Istanbul with their family and attend the trade fair where we make contact with them very professionally. (Respondent 13)

Respondent 7 pointed out that Turkish television series play an important role in attracting people to Istanbul:

When we go to dinner, we have many things to talk about: our normal life, politics and religion, but you cannot talk about these things with European customers. Once, I will never forget, I spoke about a TV series with my customers.

5.4.6.6 Gift giving

In mature business, relationship partners tend to give gifts to each other, especially on religious days or other celebrations, whether they are of the same religion or not; this shows respect and caring.

Respondent 14 claimed that giving gifts on these special days makes relationships closer and stronger:

To understand our customer's cultural sensitivity helps us to make very close relationships with them. In my opinion, when you have a close relationship with your customer you will be very successful in your business with them. Close relationships reduce misunderstanding of any problems caused by you or your product. In addition, I like it when some customers, in our religious time, they send us celebration cards; it makes me happy. I think this customer is a very sensitive person. When we started doing business in Poland, we had one customer whose wife was about to give birth to a daughter. We made a special Turkish knitting and a gift basket and sent it to them when they their daughter arrived. When they received it, they were so happy and sent us a message about how happy they were their daughter would have 'another uncle'. When we go to Poland, his wife invites us, and we have a good time with them! This customer is one of our best customers so far with sales and in our relationship.

Findings with gift giving is the way of showing appreciation or caring business partner, support the existence in the literature Ruth et al., (1999) mentioned by how its makes contribution to business partner. In special days Clarke, 2006, mentioned how important it is for charismas gift giving for people, its practise, Lotz et al., (2003) also added that contribution to existing business relationship.

5.4.6.7 Political Factors

 Participants claimed that another cultural difference emerges from national politics. Tukey's location can be problematic because of neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Iran, affecting business both directly and indirectly. A good example is the flight crisis between Russia and Turkey. Before the crisis, the Russian market was very important for Turkey, making up 20% of their sales. However, with the crisis, they lost this market. Other markets said to be affected by political factors include Libya, Syria and Egypt.

In these cases, considering cultural factors as being important for sales and in strengthening relationships with other countries:

Turkey and Russia's business relationship before the plane crisis was very good and strong. The Russian market made up 40%of our sales. In Russia, there is now propaganda against Turkey and Turkish products, so our sales decreased rapidly. From the beginning of the crisis, we tried to send products to different countries and let our Russian partners collect from there, but after Russia put a sanction on Turkish products, our business partners could no longer find a way to work with us and had to freeze our relationship. (Respondent 18)

Turkish business people added that because of the strong long-time business partnerships, they were persuaded to wait until the crisis was solved between policy makers. After the data collection for this thesis, the flight crisis between Turkey and Russia was partly resolved and the business relationship between the two countries has stabilised again.

Findings have shown that Turkish companies who do business with Russia were directly affected by political crises between their countries. That said however, their ability to maintain good relations and avoid internalising national level conflicts, is a testament to the strength and quality of the business relationship they have cultivated ..

5.4.6.8 Negotiation Habits

Cultural differences often show up in negotiation and bargaining. Participants claimed that cultural differences were visible in the skills and tactics of every nation. Mediterranean and

Middle Eastern countries prefer to negotiate overprice. During the negotiation, their voices can be raised, and they might speak quite aggressively. Receiving a discount through negotiation gives allows them with an opportunity to feel satisfied.

I have a Portuguese customer and he likes to bargain. I always give him a high price to start and then we negotiate, then we agree the actual price and to get something cheaper than the original offer makes him happy. At the end of the deal, he said 'I love to do business with you because you understand me.' He said he did not like the lack of flexibility or negotiation margin in other countries, mainly in Germany. (Respondent 1)

Respondent 5 added that, for some cultures, it is impossible not to negotiate when buying any product. It is even considered a religious requirement for Muslims who take the practice very seriously:

Some nations are very eager to bargain with you. In some Muslim countries, they believe it to be religiously compulsory. Because of this, we give some countries a negotiation margin. They think if the quantity increases, they can get a better price, which is not the same in every product.

Participants claimed that Middle Eastern and African countries enjoy negotiating on price, whereas European companies are more interested in negotiating on product quality, time and service. Findings have shown that negotiation is very curial in every part of business deals and all nations have employed unique tactics. Agndal (2007) and Salacuse (2003) claim that national culture plays significant role in negotiations habits. Furthermore, findings are in line with the argument of Kahakhar and Rammal (2013) that the negotiation process is influenced by many factors such as religion, politics and culture.

5.5 The effects of culture

The following section will consider the influence of culture on the factors previously mentioned, as these are important factors in business relationship development.

5.5.1. Trust

The importance placed on trust transcends cultures as this continues to be a universally desired outcome, the business sector is no different. As previously discussed, trust is a factor, which directly influences the business relationship development process for both parties, however each culture is unique in how it expresses and cultivates trust. As mentioned in the

previous sections, approaches to negotiation, socialising as well as communication, all aim to achieve one thing- trust. Trust is given such weight that in some cultures, only one person has to be trusted for an entire company to be granted the same privilege. This is evident in statements such as:

When working with Saudi companies, if they trust one of your sales members, they do not want to change them. For this reason, we are entrusted the same person for Saudi Arabia operations. For some countries, they do not mind working with different people; for them, mutual benefit is the most important thing. (Respondent 19)

What becomes apparent from the statements of the participants is there awareness that trust is not universally expressed and defined in the same way. This is consistently made clear as respondents provided examples of contexts previously discussed, including the ability to speak about politics, attending people's homes for dinner and socialising outside of work- all these factors emerge as trust building activities. Social interaction, validation and affirmation could be regarded as being the drivers of trust within a business context. Inviting a business partner to one's home in the Middle East is a deep expression of trust- this serves to validate a relationship and affirm to the recipient that they are trusted enough to enter the home. Holste and Fields (2010) and Mansur (2013) specifically state that within a business context, trust must be approached in a strategic manner. A long-term business partnership cannot be maintained without strategic expressions of trust, assert the authors. Turkish SMEs value trust and are well aware that this has to be expressed strategically. Evidence for this has been provided previously as respondents state that price concessions have to be made, whilst sometimes it is necessary to give a little extra than expected as a means of expressing trust and commitment.

It is also very interesting to note that much of the trust building activities relate to high context cultures in regions such as the Middle East and Asia and to a lesser extent the Mediterranean. At this point the discussion seeks to highlight an interesting point of observation. Low context cultures such as Germany is said to ensure that the business environment and relationship is direct, with little room for ambiguity. Negotiation and bargaining tend to be reserved only for intangibles such as quality and time, whilst contracts rule agreements. Alternatively, high context cultures such as Arabian Gulf regions and African countries tend to prefer verbal agreements, promises, friendships as well as value trust building activates such as socialising and informal communication. The Turkish

entrepreneurs are privy to the preferences of both groups and put a great deal of effort into meeting these expectations. That said however, Turkish SMEs continue to show a preference for business with European, low context cultures. This remains one of the inadvertent and unplanned discoveries of this research. The business relationship in such contexts is therefore maintained through formal channels, of meeting obligations and fulfilling contractual duties.

A central tenet of Turkish culture is hospitality or sacred hospitality that has been shaped by the country's rich trading history and Islamic culture (Erdoğmuş and Esen, 2018). In this respect, Erdoğmuş and Esen, (2018) inform us that so deeply intertwined is the latter, that it has unknowingly become part of Turkey's personal 'brand'. Turkey is accustomed to hosting and interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds; this study has only sought to attest to this, as the country's SMEs have a distinct preference when it comes to business culture, however continue to accommodate and build relationships with cultures across the world. In this respect, whilst the literature reveals trust (Voldnes 2014), commitment (Kaunonen, 2014), communication and information sharing (Dash et al.,2007) as being the foremost antecedents of any positive and successful business relationship, the findings suggests that acceptance, awareness and sensitivity of culture precedes these. The findings thus raise the question- to be able to express trust in an international business environment, does one firstly have to be familiar with cultural norms and practices which define trust? Or is trust universal and expressed in a uniform manner?

5.5.2. Satisfaction

The influence of culture on satisfaction in a business relationship is also very important. Satisfaction is said to lead to a long-term business relationship, much in keeping with the assertions offered by the likes of Geyskens and Steenkamp (2004). This is further evidenced in statement such as:

"If you are doing business with them and they are willing to make investments that means they are satisfied in the relationship, and we are satisfied as well."

These comments show that making investments and thinking long-term in a business relationship is the way to ensure that parties are kept satisfied across cultures.

Another participant commented that if business partners satisfy each other, they increase their level of trust and commitment.

For some cultures, satisfaction is result of good business between both parties

*"European and American customers focus on business and profit. If they are happy with us, they do not look for alternatives and they are satisfied in business." (*Respondent *14)*

These comments show how cultural differences are tied with satisfaction between both parties in a business relationship. The satisfaction level or criteria differs from nation to nation due to of culture, much like trust.

5.5.3. Commitment

Showing commitment is another factor that varies dramatically from nation to nation. With some nations, if you have a good relationship, a verbal agreement is enough. However, others prefer a written agreement to cement intentions.

It all depends on national behaviour; some nations prefer the use of contract:

"Spoken words fly away; written words remain" but asking people to commit to a written agreement can sometimes be very rude and negatively influence your business partner's attitude towards you. (Respondent 18)

Another participant added that being friends with your business partner is the best thing in some nations; if you are friends, your partner will be sure to keep their promises.

In Kazakhstan, if you are friends with them you can do all business and all the promises will be done in time. Because for them promises are like golden rules. (Respondent 19)

In summary, we can say that the influence of culture on business relationships depends on national behaviours. If countries tend to make verbal agreements and promises, it is more important for them to do business orally. On the other hand, some countries, or more professional companies, prefer to do business supported by written agreements. Overall, Turkish companies prefer to have all of their agreements in writing, however they accommodate their business partners who prefer verbal agreements, once again testifying to their inherent cultural sensitivity

5.5.4 Communication and information sharing

Communication preferences change depending on the culture that is consulted. Each culture has its own style, be it low or high context, whilst communication styles tend to be distinct, i.e. certain terms are used only for those perceived to be in power or authority, formal

language in official institutions etc. Several Turkish business people add that because of culture their customers prefer informal and formal communication styles.

*Our middle east and African business partners prefer to communicate with us very friendly and closely n the contrary European business partners prefer formal. (*Respondent 17)

Another respondent claimed that due to their culture, some business partners, prefer to keep sharing to a minimal:

Some business partners never share some information how they sell, who their main customers are etc. This happens a lot in Russia and the Middle East however in European counties they share this kind of knowledge more openly.

*Another issue concerns body language, it is necessary to adapt and change preferences as some partners prefers to get closer or touch and interrupt you during the process. (*Respondent 12*)*

Influence of culture can be observed when it comes to both verbal and non-verbal communication. In particular, openness is associated with culture as far as the respondents were concerned as certain cultures were viewed as being more closed when it came to knowledge exchanges. Western European partners were more open with their processes and offered tip into their markets and plans however this was not the case amongst Russian partners, who it seems were far more private and closed off.

5.5.5 Adaptation

Adaptation is vital when it comes to culture; what is more is that adaptation is an ongoing and fluid process given that every nation has its own preferences and rules when it comes to culture. The discussions with the respondents indicate just how deeply culture permeate sand how this has also influenced business dealings and relationships. Adaptation therefore matters; business relationships are not neutral and free from cultural norms and nuances.

One of the respondents claimed that

Adapt in different culture believes and communication styles bring success in business, therefore we do cultural analyse to market before we start business relationship this allow us to how can we adapt ourselves to market. (Respondent 9)

It is also important to note that adaptation is multi-faceted and not just limited to culture. Businesses also have to adapt to market needs and demands- i.e. cultural preferences for colours or specific dietary requirements.

In summary adaptation is important and cultural adaptation is vital for companies because cultural differences do impact businesses in several ways, including communication and product requirements.

5.6 Cultural Distance

The interviews revealed that the participants had their own ideas and definitions of what cultural distance entailed. It began to emerge that the Turkish business people were deeply proud of their capacity to understand, anticipate, learn and accept the cultural nuances of their partners. For them, it was not their place to critique or cast judgement, rather as ambassadors of their country, they sought to understand and accommodate these idiosyncrasies. Cultural distance was thus uncertainty and the feeling invoked when having to deal with businesses from unchartered territory:

I have no idea what their likes or dislikes are when we start doing business with them; it is our first experience and we do not have any clue. It makes us insecure to do business with them. (Respondent 15)

Respondent 7 added that.

We can describe cultural distance as the differences between our business partner and us.

The greater the distance, the more these businesses feared causing offence or making mistakes. One participant specifically refers to this and adds:

There are some global rules. Yes, everywhere is the same business. Pay and receive, however, when you want to set a relationship, you should consider their culture. For Muslim customers you cannot take them to a restaurant that serves alcohol, or you cannot take European customers to a restaurant that does not serve alcohol. You need to consider your customer's way of living. (Respondent 9)*)*

Another commented on commonalties and indirectly substantiated the concept of cultural distance and in particular, the definition offered by Popli et al., (2016) insomuch that the

same background, values and ideal creates closeness between people, regardless of one's religion. Respondent 14 commented:

I had many concerns with doing business with people from other religions, especially those with completely different beliefs to mine. In one country, in particular, I was very uncertain. However, I was astonished with their way of living and the benefits of their way of doing business. Now we have been working together for 10 years.

The main concern for Turkish business people is the adaptation of customer demands and life style during the business relationship process. Respect and tolerance is the key to success.

5.7 Religion

Despite the fact that nearly 99% of Turkey's population identifies as Muslim, all the participants maintained that religion did not have a direct impact on a business relationship. People look for other factors, such as their own benefit, profit, quality and service rather than if their potential business partner is of the same religion.

Religion is not a major factor to do business. If religion were a main factor, all Arab and Muslim countries would buy their products from Turkey. (Respondent 9)

Respondent 11 commented:

Religion is not important for us; money is money, we do not mind the colour of money.

Respondent 15 put forward a logical explanation:

If religion was a main factor and a reason to choose people to do business with, there are 1.5 billion Muslims in the world to do business together.

19 of the interviewees confirmed that business people have their own criteria, such as quality of the product, price and service, and no one starts a business relationship just because they share the same religion.

Nevertheless, religion informs culture and a shared identity can indeed have a positive impact on the business relationship (Fregidou-Malama & Hyder 2015). This is further supported by one respondent who noted that.

The importance of religion depends on the country or individual business partner; some countries think it helps to make a close relationship with your customer when you visit their country and pray with them; however, this is not the only reason people do business together. (Respondent 9)

This comment shows that sharing the same religion and performing religious rituals together just helps people build trust on a social level. In addition, when you are committed to something and give God's name in your religion, it shows people how serious you are.

 Three interviewees, including Respondent 8, admitted that having different religious backgrounds sometimes has a negative affect:

Sometimes religion can have a negative effect. Some European countries think that Turkey is like the Middle East and they think that men in Turkey have several wives and no tolerance for drinking alcohol, but then they come and see that Turkey is on a different level.

This prejudice can be a result of Islamophobia, or a negative experience with previous Muslim business partners.

 Sharing a religion can be advantageous if the industry and the product itself require conformity to religious beliefs, such as *halal* or *kosher*. Respondent 19 commented:

Yes, our Muslim customers choose us because we are Muslim. In addition, our Jewish customers choose us because they know we never use pork materials in our product; that makes our Muslim and Jewish customers feel secure, because business is based on trust and it takes the relationship to a high level. Product reliability for religion is very important.

Respondent 12 pointed out that an advantage of sharing the same religion means you understand how, in religious times, people's mood can change.

In Ramadan most of the people's performance decreases. As we have the same religion, we know this and try to understand people. We also know that Thursday and Friday are holiday days for Muslim countries; we know these days are important for them.

Religion can affect the way a company does business, rather than affect the way they choose a business partner. A company owner, who has strong religious beliefs, includes these beliefs in their way of doing business.

I do not choose someone because they are Muslim or of another religion. I look at their ability and benefit for our country. I do not accept any interest or any insurance to send my items because all insurance firms charge interest. (Respondent 18)

Religion cannot directly affect business relationships, however having religious sensitivity or having the same religion can help, thus adding weight to the assertions of theorists who believe in 'cultural distance' (Fregidou-Malama & Hyder 2015). This makes partners closer. People who have the same point of view and cultural background using the same religious name can understand each other better.

In literature importance of religion in business concept has been examined by many researchers (Abeng, 1997; Ali & Al-Aali, 2015; Ali, 2005, 2010; Beekun, 1997; El Garah et al., 2012), all of which have claimed that Islamic beliefs create a shared sense of identity and understanding amongst adherents. . In addition, many authors claimed that Islam is a religion with support business especially being an entrepreneur (Gümüsay, 2015; Tlaiss, 2015). However, to practising Islamic life style in their daily life does not affect their business relationship or choosing business partner. The impact of religion and country's secular nature paints an interesting picture nonetheless. More interestingly, it could be argued that the respondents have not yet grasped how deeply their religious heritage has enabled them to balance business partners in both East and the West. Turkey balances two regions based on its unique geographic location- it therefore serves as a gateway into two distinct cultures- perhaps it is this position that allows them to practice cultural sensitivity so deftly. Being Muslim, they are able to inherently understand their business partners who come from Muslim majority cultures, whilst being in proximity to Europe has influenced and shaped aspects of their ideals and in particular, their business ideals.

5.8 Language

Language is a key factor for communication between businesses partners, and all participants agreed that speaking a foreign language is very useful in establishing a strong relationship.

Respondent 10 stated that

Yes, language helps in two ways: it helps a lot to communicate in your partner's local language, just basic things and making jokes helps relationships keep very close.

Respondent 11 added that even learning very basic phrases in a business partner's language shows that one is e sincere and committed to pleasing your partner.

When we do any presentation to our customers or go to their country, I try to learn some basic expressions in their language. As this makes us comfortable with them and shows, we are sincere.

This Respondent stresses that language has a professional and social function. Although English is the main language for commerce, if the country one is dealing with not typically strong in speaking English, it is important to learn their language to be able to communicate effectively.

Respondent 20 added that if you do not know the target market's language there are interpreters; however, they might not represent you accurately. This may be a reason why language competence is vital for business owners and professionals. Nevertheless, using an interpreter can be valuable:

It is very important. I went to one country and spoke with my customer for half an hour, then the interpreter talked for 5 minutes and I realised that the interpreter does not explain things my way. Then I decided to bring my own interpreter. (Respondent 20)

Turkish business people added that the main languages for their target markets are English, Arabic, Russian and Chinese. Interestingly, they did not include Spanish; some of the interviewees suggested that this could be because the Spanish and Latin American market is not yet seen as being lucrative for Turkish companies' agendas.

English is enough to communicate all around the world but sometimes to speak Arabic, Russian; Chinese is very useful for us. (Respondent 14)

In summary, all participants agreed on the importance of language competence. They try to train their staff for their target markets or employ someone who can speak the target country's language. Another interesting idea is that English is not considered a foreign language; everybody has to know English, but there are advantages in speaking the local language.

The Findings show that language and language competence is vital for companies to survive in the business world and an essential tool to set up relationship with business partners. Swift (2017) claims that language competence helps to increase effective communication and decreases misunderstanding between business partners and helps to develop business relationships between business partners.

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5.9 Preferred countries

This section examines which countries Turkish business people like to do business with and why.

5.9.1. Europe

As mentioned earlier, participants noted that they chiefly preferred conducting business with European countries, although they did not necessarily specify which ones and talked about them as a group. The reason is that they viewed all European countries in the same way. Some participants were more specific, naming Germany, England, France, Spain and Italy.

They gave several reasons for these choices: ease of payment, professional working environment and a strong business culture, putting everything on paper and keeping to agreements, strong and fair justice system, and easy custom regulations because of Turkey's agreement with the EU.

I like to do business with Germany because they are very straightforward. They know what they want and they do not negotiate the price all the time. For them, service, quality and delivery time are the most important factors. (Respondent 13)

Respondent t 15 commented that:

We have done business with Britain for nearly 25 years. I like their respect and the way they do business. They want simple and good quality. They teach us many new things as well; we learn the new trends in business from them.

Respondent 19 felt the same way about working with Italy and Spain:

I like to do business with Italy and Spain because I like their way of doing business. They are also very friendly when we talk with them and whenever we go to their country, they are very welcoming. This makes us very close. They think with their hearts and I like this because we are like that too.

This comment suggests that physical distance held little importance or sway, rather these countries happen to mirror a number of Turkish ideals and values, thus creating a sense of comfort and admiration amongst Turkish businesses. The main reason for these preferences is attitude and being friendly. Therefore, cultural factors come into this and can be a primary reason for choosing one business partner over another.

When we work with European countries, we always learn new things because of the economic capacity and human rights in European countries. The governments make new rules and develop new ideas. Because of this, our products adhere to very high standards and, as such, when we sell to other nations such as Gulf countries, we have a competitive advantage. The fact that we sell to Europe, where high standards are set, shows we are upto-date, successful and reliable. (Respondent 7)

This shows that to work with European countries provides Turkish business people with a competitive advantage and confidence. Being able to sell in Europe makes them better able to enter other countries' markets. European countries offer Turkish companies an opportunity to grow and develop as well as ways through which they can improve themselves.

Business volume is another advantage for Turkish companies looking to make money in Europe, and with the exchange rates as they are; businesses are set to profit from having clients in European countries. Europe is also attractive to the Turkish business economy because of its large consumer buying power.

5.9.2. Arab Countries

Respondents like to do business with Arab countries for several reasons:

• More profit margins

• Less competition

• Cultural similarity

• Countries without visa regulations.

Some countries in particular were mentioned; the reasons for these preferences are detailed below.

5.9.3. Iraq

The reasons relate to geographical closeness, lower transport costs and ease of meeting; cultural similarity; and Iraqi business people's ability to speak Turkish.

We have worked with our Iraqi partner for such a long time; business between us started with our fathers and we are very happy to do business together. Our jokes and our concerns in life and business are the same. Turkey is always the best and easiest choice for them to do business with because of closeness and cost. (Respondent 6) Participant 18 noted:

When we do business with Iraqi people; they can speak Turkish very fluently, which allows us to understand them very clearly. We know what both parties want and speaking the same language allows us to explain everything to them very well.

5.9.4. Egypt

Turkish business like to do business with Egypt mainly because of its cultural similarity to Turkey.

When I go to Egypt, I feel like I am at home. We have been doing business with our Egyptian customer for nearly 30 years. The cultural environment is very similar to Turkey. In Europe, especially Italy and Spain, it is difficult to find halal *food and praying places. After doing business with our Egyptian partners for so many years, we have a real connection. In the business world, where there are so many opportunities for customers to go elsewhere, we really value this loyalty; we have become good friends, met each other's families and know all their kids' names.* (Respondent 1)

We know Arab countries are very risky and problematic to invest in. Problems with security and payments are worrying, but the profit margin and price for this market is very good for us. (Respondent 3)

We also used to do business with North African Arab countries like Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, where customer habits are similar to ours. Our advantage in selling to them is that we understand them.

We mainly work with Arab countries. Our product base is kitchen appliances and, in this business, cultural similarities are very important for us, to understand our customer demands; because of this we are successful in Arab countries. (Respondent 24)

5.9.5. Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa emerges as the newest destination for Turkish companies, mainly because they offer:

•	Interesting opportunities for business

- Demand for Turkish products, especially furniture and textiles

- Government activities

Last year, the Turkish government made several trade agreements with African countries, increasing the volume of trade with the continent.

The Turkish government also allows numerous flights to the continent, with more luggage allowance, which encourages customers from Africa to fly into Turkey, buy a lot, and take it home. Additionally, Turkish TV series act as an advertisement for the country, which is a big advantage for Turkish businesses and trade fairs.

Although the African market is very new for Turkish businesses, they have already completed many business deals in this burgeoning market. For financial security, many companies ask for all payments up-front and set up agreements without credit.

When we speak with our African customers, we can understand their demands and regulations. Cost is an important point of discussion for them. In business meetings, they like to go for dinner with us and they are always pleased with our hospitality. (Respondent 14)

5.9.6. Unpopular countries

Participants claimed that they do not like to do business with some countries because of their business conditions and methods. Nevertheless, with the exception of Iran, they failed to give any clear reason or to name specific countries, claiming that Turkish businesses have no problems in doing business with any nation; their main purpose is to sell to anyone as long as they pay money.

We can work with anyone as long as they pay the money. If working with the country involves many risks or if they have a reputation for making problems, we always take payment first and do not take responsibility for transport and delivery. (Respondent 24)

Respondent 18 added that there is no 'never' and no set rules in doing business with someone:

All my life experience shows that you never know when you need someone. Politics change rapidly and this could be an opportunity for countries, such as Iran, to have sanctions lifted. As a result, nowadays, we do so much business with them.

In response to this question, most participants stressed that they do not want to close the door on selling products in any given country. However, 3 of the 25 Respondents named Iran as a country they find it very difficult, or prefer not, to do business with.

Iran

Respondent 15 said: *When you try to sell something in Iran, their attitude is not good. They try to show you they know everything. Another problem is payment because customs regulations are very complex.*

Respondent 5 added that the attitude of Iranian companies towards them is not appropriate:

When you do business with Iran, you have to be careful that they do not try to sell you products. They like to sell rather than buy.

Respondent 11 homed in on the international regulations and bank transfer:

Iran is monitored. Because of this, we should be careful any bank transfer and selling items that could be against international sanctions; if this happens, your company can be marked red and this affects business with Europe and the USA.

In summary, business-to-business dealings depend on a country's economic power, their way of doing business, and profit margins. Respondents considered these criteria when deciding whether or not they preferred doing business with a particular country, although cultural sensitivity was generally agreed to be an important consideration. They concluded that in business, there are no red lines, and every country can be good for business as showing prejudice was simply not constructive

The findings have shown that establishing or disliking business with other nations is based on company benefit, which is the preferred way of Turkish business people. Economic benefits, easy to do business and business knowledge development are the critical elements in developing business with different nations. In the same way, Turkish business people show a preference for engaging with Arab countries and mainly neighbouring ones due to geographical closeness and easy business dealings. The African market is also mentioned because of growing opportunities for their business. Swift (1999) suggests that only countries which have high cultural closeness or similarity choose to work with one another. However, in the case of Turkish business people this is not always the case. Cultural similarities are preferable in a business relationship but not mandatory.

5.10 Summary

This chapter started by defining a business relationship from the participants' point of view. Two main sections followed, the first explaining how business relationships start, develop, and continue and the second analysed and explained which factors directly or indirectly influence them. In particular, cultural factors, including religion and language, were examined in detail.

All findings discussed are supported by the relevant literature reviewed. The next chapter explains the overall conclusions and describes the fulfilment of the research aim and objectives. Contributions to knowledge, and limitations, will be presented. The chapter concludes by presenting an overall conclusion and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Six
Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the research aim and objectives, answers the research questions and presents the knowledge and practical contributions of the present study to this field.

6.2 Summary of major findings aligned with aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to identify and investigate the existing gaps in the literature, and evaluate the factors influencing the development of cross-cultural business relationships of Turkish manufacturing SMEs.

After reviewing the literature on business relationship development and culture within the context of international business, (Chapter 2), 25 semi-structured interviews with Turkish business people were held to gather relevant information and fulfil the objectives. Some of the findings proved to be unique, thus contributing to the current body of knowledge.

Given the focus on cross-cultural business relations, studying culture was an integral aspect of this investigation. Few studies have focused on developing countries and their business relationships within this context. Therefore, this research is important in covering developing countries' business relationships with other nations.

The aim is elaborated through the following objectives.

Objective One: To analyse whether trust and adaptation are critical to Turkish SMEs fostering better business relationship with their business partners.

On the basis of the findings of the study, it emerges that trust is indeed crucial to the development of any business relationship, this is no different for the SME sector in Turkey. An extensive synthesis and critique of the literature within the second chapter of this thesis reveals that trust is regarded as the central component of any relationship, business or otherwise. Trust rests at the heart of longevity within the context of businesses, as well as defines the practices and processes that business undertake when dealing with partners.

Trust is fundamental to the development of the business relationship, the latter is defined within the second chapter, before a number of theories are consulted in order to better understand how these develop, grow and are sustained. The literature also brought to light the

factors that are necessary in developing business relationships between the involved parties. Many factors directly influence the development trajectory that business relationships undergo, trust however, is said to be the most crucial of these factors. Additional factors which emerge include, communication, commitment, satisfaction, adaptation and culture. When attempting to understand trust and just how this is cultivated within cross cultural business relations, culture in particular emerged as being fundamental to the business relationship. The literature thus reveals that culture is unique and not homogenous in any way. Each society is characterised by distinct norms, values and beliefs. These beliefs in turn define how they view and interact with not only each other but their business partners too, both domestic and international.

Whilst culture was undoubtedly central to how trust was perceived and conceptualised, it also emerged as being potentially contentious as the extent to which it impacts business relations has yet to be effectively established. Theories relating to cultural distance were also covered as well as the cultural assessment frameworks offered by the likes of Hofstede (1984) and Schwartz (2001). The literature further covered social exchange theories in order to develop an understanding into relationships and societal expectations. In doing so, it was possible to understand how individual cultures interact with one another and express themselves. As noted, trust for example is uniquely expressed, whilst some may exchange contracts as a means of establishing trust, others exchange experiences i.e. hosting business partners in one's home. Nonetheless, trust emerges as not only a critical factor, rather, it serves as the foundation upon which any business relationship is built. Without trust, there is unlikely to be a business relationship. This is reflected by the opinions on neighbouring Iranian partners who the Turkish respondents of this study were reluctant to engage with. The differences in attitude, and focus Iranians place on issues such as price, were viewed as impolite. These differences in values appear to compound relations between these respective SME sectors, at least from a Turkish point of view. In addition to the above, it also emerged that adaptation was also important as firms were expected to be flexible enough to continuously adapt to new market and customer demands. In this study, the participants themselves mentioned several times that this was also a key to success in any target market.

The review of the literature brought to light a number of 'gaps' in knowledge, chief amongst which related to international business, the actual business relationship and a culture such as Turkey which happens to carefully balance norms which are both Western and Eastern. The

interviews revealed that Turkey's unique geographic position affords it an insight and understanding of surrounding cultures, despite this, very little in the way of academic research has been conducted to examine just how Turkey develops and sustains business relations. As such, the present research contributes to current thinking, bringing to light factors such as politics, religion and financial payment which also have the ability to shape the way in which a business relationship develops.

Ultimately, it appears that Turkey's unique geographical position as well as culture which places a great deal of emphasis upon hospitality, has allowed it relationship building prowess. An appreciation and understanding of the inherent differences in culture has allowed Turkish firms to adapt to these and subsequently foster successful cross-cultural business relationships. Regardless of any external factor such as politics, Turkish firms have been able to successfully make expressions of trust, be it through contracts, verbal promises or payment concessions, in a bid to develop and foster cross-cultural business relationships.

Objective 2: To evaluate whether commitment and satisfaction influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.

In order to accomplish this objective, semi-structured interviews with a total of 25 representatives from the Turkish SME sector were held. Respondents' answers were analysed and discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Building upon the previous objective, trust was viewed as the antecedent to any successful business relationship. In fact, each business relationship stage was characterised by concessions and actions which served as an expression of trust. This was ultimately due to the fact that satisfaction was crucial to the longevity and development of the relationship. For example, new clients would request certain terms such as cash payments or verbal contracts- it was the response of the Turkish business people that shaped satisfaction. If customers were satisfied with the ways in which their requests were accommodated, they would most likely persist with the relationship. In this respect, partners from certain cultures preferred informal channels of communication and enjoyed socialising- the response of the Turkish businesses, and their ability to adapt successfully to these requests, often resulted in satisfaction and the continuation of a business relationship. Commitment also emerged as a

crucial factor which contributed to trust and thus a business relationship with greater longevity.

Business relationships and their development by stages were perceived distinctly by Turkish business people; the definitions offered by these practitioners stood in stark contrast to those found within the literature. The review of the literature suggested that a business relationship was an occurrence or an ongoing event between two or more parties. In contrast to this, the business relationship was very much seen as a means to an end by the interviewees that took part in this study. A business relationship represented an activity which generated money for their economy (Turkey). Viewing this relationship as an investment, meant that the respondents very much positioned and styled themselves as ambassadors and representatives of their culture and Turkey. For them, positive cross-cultural business interactions would improve Turkey's position as a trading partner and ultimately boost its business profile. As a result of this, Turkish SMEs are inherently aware of cultural differences and are actively 'sensitive' to these. Prior to doing business with international partners, they actively seek out information from acquaintances and friends-they show an interest in both data and statistics as well as information relating to the socio-cultural issues pertinent to markets. This serves as further evidence into the importance placed on client satisfaction; the Turkish business people were acutely aware of how important this was and the ways in which this was linked to long-term commitment.

In light of this, the data indicates that business relationships of this nature are held in high regard and deeply valued by the Turkish business representatives. They adopt a distinct approach to relationship building, in that despite preferences for certain cultures, they will adapt their ways and customs to suit their partners. A preference for low-context communication cultures emerged from the findings- despite this however, they continued to build relationships and showed value for high context communication cultures. Relationships were also very linear, following distinct stages, start-develop-continue. This may be a reflection of collectivist tendencies or religious ones within society. Whilst largely secular, Turkish culture has been greatly shaped by Islamic values- these include ideals such as harmony, peace and maintaining social ties. Relationships seldom come to an end as a result, nor are they terminated, as this stands at odds with collectivist tendencies. Once a relationship is established, Turks believe that it does not necessarily have to be terminated or maintained if one is unable to do so. They work on the belief that if necessary, they can

resume relationships when necessary. To summarise, Turks did not believe in terminating relationships, if they were unable to interact with partners, for example Russians, due to political sanctions, they would simply wait these out before resuming trade once matters improved.

Economic and social development cannot be considered without national and cultural identity; this is true for SMEs even more than for multinational companies. Turkish companies see the development of business relationships within the cultural and political environment.

Although political factors, geopolitical risks and religion are important in understanding Turkish companies' business relationships, the literature has not paid enough attention to understanding their influence. Studies have largely focused on Western contexts and developed regions political stability is taken for granted and religion is not granted much attention due to the prevalence of secularism.

Objective 3: To assess whether communication/information sharing influences the business relationship between Turkish SMEs and their business partners.

Communication emerged as being crucial to the business relationship and it appears that Turkish businesses are well-equipped when it comes to interacting with their business partners. More specifically, the empirical findings cast light onto the fact that Turkish business representatives are acutely familiar with, and aware of, cultural nuances and norms that exist in other cultures. They appear to hold a high degree of intercultural competence. This is best reflected by their adaption to communication preferences of both high and low context cultures. Low context cultures such as those found in Western Europe were actually preferred by the respondents of the study; they revealed that contracts and providing clear, concise and direct information at the onset of relations with Germans and French partners, would result in higher levels of business partner satisfaction and commitment. High-context communication cultures were also accommodated by avoiding contracts which these cultures took offence to and made use of verbal promises instead. In addition to this, the participants were well aware of the fact that their high-context partners had a preference for informal communication channels. The participants revealed that communication and information sharing was actually contingent on the extent to which they (Turkish businesses) responded to requests and the extent to which these responses were satisfactory to their clients. When satisfied, clients increased their frequency of communication. The more trust was cultivated,

the greater the chance was of informal communication. As such, communication and information sharing did indeed positively influence the business relationship, however this was dependent on the successful fulfilment of obligations.

Objective 4: To provide appropriate conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

The present study sheds light on a number of issues and factors that have thus far not featured within existing studies. Some factors mentioned in the semi-structured interviews that did not appear in the literature include culture, religion and political factors. All these have largely been ignored by other researchers and thus emerge as a major contribution of the present study

Culture

Turkish business relationships with a cross-cultural base cannot ignore the influence or importance of culture. Cultural similarities and closeness were mentioned by respondents in two situations. First, they help to understand the behaviours and habits of potential consumers, and thus facilitate greater volumes of trade. Business partners, particularly those from Arab and African cultures appear to appreciate it when nuances of their culture are taken into consideration. The majority of Turkish SMEs would prefer to do business using contracts- however prior experiences indicate that this was offensive to some cultures who viewed contracts as a slight to their ethics or character. Rather than remain steadfast in preferences, Turkish SMEs adapt to the needs of their partners by accepting verbal promises as well as cash payments. This is an expression of trust and hospitality on their part and one which takes precedence given that they viewed business as a tool to 'bring money' into Turkey. An additional issue that emerge was the active awareness of Turkey's brand image, hospitality being one of the key elements of this image. They thus felt dutybound to uphold this and viewed Turkish hospitality as a magnet to strengthening relationships with MENA, African and old Turkic Central Asian countries.

Religion

The interviews also revealed religion as having an indirect effect on the development of the business relationship. The national religious identity and that of business people in SMEs made us question why studies conducted in other countries do not mention religion.

However, religion is not considered as an essential factor in influencing business relationships, for example with Scandinavia or China where religion is not a major factor of life. Turkey combines a religious identity with a secular system of politics and education. One respondent commented that religion can help develop a personal relationship and help the socialisation of company staff, so its, influence can be considered indirectly as it suggests being a good person, promoting honesty, trust and commitment can help to strengthen social and economic ties. (Autiero and Vinci, 2016). On this point, our findings support the literature.

Nevertheless, the actions of some extremist religious groups can negatively affect the brand image of Islamic countries.

Political factors

Business cannot be conducted without considering a country's political system and the policy makers' actions. Political and geopolitical changes are important for companies engaged in international business. The situation is very sensitive for Turkey because of its geopolitical position and its neighbours: Syria, Iran and Iraq. For example, the flight crisis in which Turkey shot down a Russian aircraft in its airspace resulted in serious political problems, as Russia applied several sanctions to Turkey. This forced Turkish business people to look for other markets in which to operate and build new relationships. The interviewees mentioned several countries with which have increased volume of business as a result.

Another point forcing Turkish business people to seek new relationships with other countries in Europe and the Middle East, relates to their desire to alter incorrect or negative perceptions of Turkey. Some respondents also mentioned Africa as a potentially lucrative business market.

When asked which countries they did not like to do business with, several respondents chose not to name any, for two reasons: first, the political climate might change; and second, business focuses on benefit and profit, so they will trade with any country.

Despite SME's refusal to accept a termination stage to business relations, the Turkish government needs to support them through trade deals and free trade zones, in developing new business partnerships.

6.3 Practical contributions

The findings of the present research shed light onto a sector that has otherwise been neglected within scholarship. These findings are likely to be of value to a number of stakeholder groups, including policy makers, Turkish businesses as well as those looking to better understand the Turkish business sector i.e. investors.

Although some countries still see Turkey as driven by religious rules or a strict, intolerant lifestyle; on the contrary, this research shows that Turkish business are accommodating, hospitable, flexible and above all, culturally aware and sensitive to differences. Cultural distances, whilst recognised are in no way seen as an impediment to businesses in Turkey, this is further demonstrated by their eagerness and willingness to enter African markets beyond North Africa. The focus on relationships and the appreciation of cultivating these, means that political risks are not viewed with much trepidation.

The findings further contribute to the discipline in that they bring to light the challenges posed by cross-cultural business relationships and in particular, the factors that are most important in such contexts. By heeding these, for example, the different ways trust is expressed depending on culture/context, businesses will be able to maintain relationships more effectively. The example set by Turkish businesses can further help to ease anxieties that others may feel when thinking of entering new markets. Indeed, Turkey occupies an interesting and strategic geographic position, one that they have successfully leveraged to balance and meet the cultural demands of both Eastern and Western business partners. Their mastery of this is indeed interesting and one which business are able to learn from. The advent of technology means that location is not the only advantage one can enjoy in business. Information is largely available online and ultimately, it is the acceptance, understanding and appreciation of cultural differences that allows a firm to successfully build a business relationship beyond its own borders.

On the basis of this findings, it is recommended that businesses engaged in cross-cultural trade continue to focus on learning and collecting information on cultural norms. Given the

role of trust and how this serves as the foundation upon which relationships develop, it is further recommended that businesses commit themselves to learning about trust within the context of their target culture in order to understand what expressions constitute trust and how these can be further developed and pursued.

6.4 Academic contributions

A major contribution of the study relates to the potential definitions of, and ways in which, a business relationship can be understood. A business relationship has thus far been regarded as an event; however, these findings suggest that for some cultures, a business relationship is seen as a means to an end. This is not necessarily a negative feature nor an objectifying one, rather it suggests just how important this relationship is. It is regarded as being valuable and one which has to be nurtured and developed; a business relationship is multi-faceted and one which has to be cultivated through social relations and expressions of trust. The findings go on to further highlight the importance of culture; the rise of technology and the Internet has increasingly blurred boundaries and there is a risk of the world being viewed as a giant village, united by the same ideals and values. Regardless of advancements in technology, culture will continue to define societies and their members; this is evidenced in the fact that despite being secular, Turkish attitudes to relationships and hospitality are deeply rooted in Islamic culture.

Technological, social and economic development have done little to change this; these values are deeply woven into the fabric of Turkish society. This is an additional contribution of the present study as it provides an insight into the psyche of business people in Turkey. Despite being in such close proximity to Europe, Turkey's image has not been stable in the eyes of the masses; the findings from this study thus help to clarify any misconceptions and highlight the nature of the business environment of Turkey. Potential clients can also gain an insight into the working culture in Turkey and the underlying values that govern the behaviour of Turkish businesses.

The study has further contributed by bringing to the fore the perceptions of the business relationship and how this is not seen as something that can be terminated. These opinions on the termination or dissolution of a business relationship are significant.

6.5 Limitations of the research

As with any research, the present one is not without its limitations. The first of which relates to the context as the focus is only on one SME sector in one country. The sample size of 25 participants is not generalisable upon further scrutiny. To do so, it would be necessary to expand the sample size to include members from other sectors in Turkey, beyond the manufacturing sector. In addition to this, further limitations relate to the inability to compare these findings with other published research given that there are limited studies on the topic within the context of developed countries.

Additional limitations relate to possible language issues as the interviews were conducted in Turkish. There is a possibility that some meaning, or insights may have been lost during the translation process. I did endeavour to remedy this by asking the same question a number of times in different ways however in some instances, this led to confusion amongst the participants. Time constraints and conflicting schedules also meant that the interviewees could not be thoroughly questioned, nor was it possible to explore all the issues that came to light. Furthermore, previous studies have focused on factors such as politics or foreign policy, which have not been examined in sufficient detail in this study.

6.6 Areas for Further Research

This research focused on Turkish SMEs in the manufacturing industry, situated in Istanbul; further research in other industries and locations will improve the generalisability of the findings.

Creating international business relationships is able to provide a critical competitive advantage. Swift (2016) claimed that no matter how far technological development improves people's lives and ways of doing business, the human factor will always be significant and determine business and development. Therefore, for businesses to succeed, the emotional dimension that relationships require, has to be given due concern. Given the insights that emerged, specifically those that related to Turkish businesses peoples' perceptions of themselves as ambassadors of their culture and country, further study into place branding and the business sector would likely offer valuable insights.

6.7 Personal Reflection

The journey towards the attainment of the PhD award as been a deeply enriching and humbling one. I have cherished the opportunity to learn and expand my own knowledge on

the topic under investigation. Looking back, at the very onset of my journey I had felt confident with my insights and understanding of the topic, however I can now say with conviction that the knowledge I possessed was just a drop in the ocean compared to the learning I have amassed three years into my journey as a PhD. candidate. I have come to appreciate that culture is transcendental and not a phenomenon which can be quantified or measured. This has given me a new found appreciation of the existing body of research and also the seminal work produced by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede's contributions, despite the criticisms, proved to be invaluable. Whilst I was familiar with this prior to my research journey, using these as a lens through which to directly examine my own culture, proved to be a deeply insightful and enriching experience. I was able to experience a facet of Turkish culture in a way that I had never done so before; it was fascinating to uncover just how businesses managed their 'individualistic' needs in a collectivist society. I came to appreciate the weight of word of mouth recommendations in Turkey and just how spoken words carried weight for collectivist societies.

Armed with this newfound understanding, should I have the opportunity to relive the experience, I would foremostly improve the research instrument used- the interview questions. Upon reflection I feel these were somewhat direct and did not necessarily translate well into Turkish. Furthermore, time constraints left me unable to prompt all the insights that emerged, many of which I now feel could have offered richer data. Incidentally, it was the interviews with the business people that I enjoyed the most. Being involved in international business myself, I relished the opportunity to ask questions and interact with those I identified with, not only culturally but on a professional level. I inherently understood many of their concerns but my position as a researcher allowed me to objectively explore the issues that arose from these discussions further. In my readings of business-related literature during the course of my studies, I have keenly followed debates relating to ethics and corporate social responsibility. In particular, I have found arguments which suggest that the sole purpose of a business is to generate profits for shareholders to be thought-provoking and have particularly enjoyed reading counter-arguments that have emerged over the past few decades. I have found that this view is not universal as we in Turkey, view business as a collective endeavour and one which should benefit all stakeholders involved. It is this stance that has perhaps influenced the commitment to, and appreciation of culture, by Turkish business people in general. Given the opportunity to undertake the research again, I would definitely attempt to incorporate issues relating to

business ethics and social responsibility in order to understand the extent to which culture shapes and influences this. In hindsight, I would have preferred to expand my research lens and conceptual approach to include this area of study. This ties into the unexpected findings along the way- I found that despite stereotypes and general prejudices that exist the world over, Turkish business people were able to suspend these when dealing with their partners. When it came to trade, they appeared to pursue radical objectivity and did not in any way allow politics to influence their relations.

As far as future directions are concerned, I would hope that the research would be followed up and taken further to explore the concept of place branding. One unexpected finding related to the fact that Turkish business people have taken it upon themselves to brand their country- their commitment to accommodating cultures effortlessly is rooted in their desire to improve perceptions of Turkey. This appears to be a collective commitment of the respondents and one which has not in any way been prompted by policy makers or society in general. I therefore feel that this is an area that would be interesting to explore and one that would potentially hold economic benefit from a political perspective.

I continue to reflect and digest the findings of the present study and hope to synthesize these effectively in order to disseminate these via conferences and journals. At present I am committed to learning just how I can effectively summarize these findings before focusing on journal submissions.

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Appendix 1: Interview Letter

Mr. Suleyman Tek   **Dr. Jonathan   Swift**

PhD Student ID @00287206   **PhD Supervisor**
School of Business

<div align="center">

The Cover Letter of Semi-structured Interview

</div>

Dear Sir/Madam

This semi-structure interview has been designed to find out the opinions and attitudes that the seniors, manager, and staff members have an experience to what is going about their work. Specifically, interviews questions deal with identify and investigate the factors that influence cross-cultural business relationships and their development in Turkish manufacturing SMEs with their business partners.

It will not take you more than 45 minutes to answer the questions. There is no need to write your name or address. The researcher ensures that the information you provide will be treated confidentially and only used for the research proposes.

You have been chosen to test interview questions and your response is very important to response the form of interview questions. The researcher will be grateful to hear the answer or the feedback from you and the comments and the suggestions from the interviewee will provide the researcher to carry on finding and analysis the data of my research.

 Yours Faithfully

 University of Salford   United Kingdom

Semi-Structure Interviews Questions

There are some questions to be used for the semi-structure interviews with senior managers, managers and staff members at Turkish Companies staff in Istanbul. Please read the questions carefully and the interview itself should take up no more than 45 minutes of your valuable time.

1.0 Demographics Data;

Name: ………………………………………….

 Current Job Title: …………………………….

Experience: …………………………………….

Male   Female

Sex [   ]   [   ]

Age ……………… Highest Qualification …………………

Interview Questions

1. Based on your experience, how would you define cross-cultural BRD? How? Why?

2. So, in your opinion, how many stages are there in the BRD? What are they?

3. How can you describe each stage? What are the objectives of each stage? Why? How?

4.   What are the factors that you consider important for the BRD in each stage? How? Why? Can you explain more?

5.   What makes the relationship successful at each stage? Can you give an example? How? Why?

6.   What makes the relationship unsuccessful at each stage? Can you give an example?

7.   How do you communicate through BRD? (Formal/ informal, language, media 'phone, fax, social media') How? Why? Can you elaborate more?

8.   Overall, what is the role and importance of culture in the BRD process? Why? How? Can you give an example?

9.   What is the role of religion in business relationship? Can you explain more? How? Why?

10.   Overall, what are the foreign language competences in the BRD process? Why? How? Can you give an example?

11.   Which countries do you like doing business with it? Why?

12.   Which countries do you dislike doing business with it? Why?

Appendix II: Ethical approval

University of Salford
MANCHESTER

College of Arts & Social Sciences
Room 633 Maxwell Building
The Crescent
Salford, M5 4WT
Tel: 0161 295 5876

15 June 2015

Suleyman Tek
University of Salford

Dear Suleyman

Re: **Ethical Approval Application – 140039**

I am pleased to inform you that based on the information provided, the Research Ethics Panel have no objections on ethical grounds to your project.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Woodman
On Behalf of CASS Research Ethics Panel