

Pillars of Cooperation in International Entrepreneurship: A Qualitative Investigation of Turkish Ventures¹

Betül DEMİR ^a Aytuğ SÖZÜER ^b

^b Yalova University, Institute of Graduate Programs, Yalova, Türkiye. betuldmr1851@gmail.com

^a Yalova University, Department of International Trade and Finance, Yalova, Türkiye. aytug.sozuer@yalova.edu.tr

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

International business
Networks
Cooperative behavior
Turkish exporters

Received 28 August 2023

Revised 19 February 2024

Accepted 1 March 2024

Article Classification:

Research Article

Purpose – This study aims to explore the factors influencing network relations in the context of international entrepreneurship, with a specific focus on Turkish ventures. The investigation delves into the dynamics that underlie these relationships, aiming to uncover the key elements that shape and impact the engagement of Turkish businesses in international entrepreneurial activities.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing individual semi-structured interviews with purposive sampling. Interviews with twelve participants, including business owners, professionals, and practitioners who have direct experience in international entrepreneurship were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes from the qualitative data.

Findings – The analysis of the interviews revealed four central themes that significantly influence network relations. First, trust emerges as a cornerstone element, playing a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining enduring relationships. Second, effective communication surfaces as a critical factor in aligning diverse perspectives among stakeholders. Third, the process of relational learning is highlighted as a continuous mechanism through which Turkish ventures gain knowledge from collaborative efforts. Lastly, the study underscores the diversity of strategies employed in the development of partnerships, indicating the multifaceted nature of fostering international collaborations.

Discussion – These findings shed light on international entrepreneurship dynamics in Türkiye, emphasizing collaborative strategies. Ultimately, leveraging relationships enhances resource access and market competitiveness. This knowledge is consistent with the literature. On the other hand, investigating the reasons behind the lack of strong networks with non-customer/non-dealer parties in international markets in Turkish entrepreneurial behavior presents an intriguing subject for future research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of international entrepreneurship has come into sharper focus in recent years, reflecting the profound impact of interconnectedness on business endeavors. As markets become more integrated and technological advancements facilitate seamless cross-border interactions, organizations find themselves compelled to adapt and innovate to seize opportunities beyond their domestic borders. This surge in interest in international entrepreneurship is fueled by the recognition that traditional business models and approaches must evolve to address the complexities of a globalized marketplace (Coviello et al., 2011; Zahra, 2021).

One of the core elements underlying international entrepreneurship is the network approach, a paradigm that recognizes the transformation of markets as an outcome of exchanges among various stakeholders within specific market contexts (Johanson and Mattsson, 2015). While traditional entrepreneurial analyses often centered on individual attributes and strategic decisions, the contemporary landscape emphasizes the critical importance of relationships, collaborations, and connections that transcend geographical boundaries. This shift necessitates a deeper understanding of network dynamics, the accumulation of social capital, and the art of navigating cultural nuances (Bıçakçıoğlu-Peynirci 2020).

¹This study is based on the master's thesis of Ms. Betül Demir, titled "International entrepreneurship and cooperations abroad: A qualitative analysis on exporters in Turkey" and defended on 01.09.2022 at Yalova University Department of International Trade and Finance

Suggested Citation

Demir, B., Sözüer, A., (2024). Pillars of Cooperation in International Entrepreneurship: A Qualitative Investigation of Turkish Ventures, *Journal of Business Research-Turk*, 16 (1), 153-165.

Within this context, the present research undertakes a qualitative exploration of inter-organizational cooperative activities in the realm of international entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on Turkish businesses. Extant literature contains a wealth of research on international entrepreneurship (see reviews of Allen, 2016; Coombs et al., 2009; Fuentes et al., 2019; Giamartino et al., 1993; Keupp and Gassmann, 2009; Kiss et al., 2012; Liesch et al., 2011; Mainela et al., 2013; Reuber and Fischer, 2011; Terjesen et al., 2013). This study serves as a response to the limited research attention given to the role of cooperative relationships in the Turkish international entrepreneurship landscape (Sözüer et al., 2017). While existing studies have examined various dimensions of international entrepreneurship (especially born globals), they often fall short in emphasizing the influence of cooperative behavior, which is particularly relevant within the network approach framework.

The subsequent sections will first outline the literature review and research methodology, then delve into the findings and analyses of the interviews, and finally discuss the implications of the research. Through this examination, it is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding international entrepreneurship, network dynamics, and the pivotal role of collaborative strategies in shaping successful global business ventures.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section offers an exploration of the multifaceted domain of international entrepreneurship, delving into seminal conceptualizations, then evolves to highlight the contemporary perspectives on network dynamics, and finally culminates in a review of empirical research shedding light on the internationally entrepreneurial ventures in Türkiye.

2.1. International entrepreneurship

The first reference to the concept of "international entrepreneurship" is known as being appeared in a short article written by J.F. Morrow. In his work, Morrow (1988) highlights previously untapped foreign markets, the application of cutting-edge technological advancements in new ventures, and cultural awareness.

The early conceptualization of international entrepreneurship is attributed to P. P. McDougall. In McDougall (1989:388), the concept is defined as "the development of international new ventures or start-ups that, from their inception, engage in international business, thus viewing their operating domain as international from the initial stages of the firm's operation." Subsequently, Oviatt and McDougall (1994:49) have established theoretical foundations for emerging international entrepreneurs built upon the pressures of rapid internationalization. In their study, international new ventures are referred to as "a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries." Zahra (1993), on the other hand, emphasized that international entrepreneurship should encompass the outcomes of risk-taking behaviors of all businesses, whether new or established, that engage in ventures in international markets. Zahra argued that both small and large, established and new enterprises were turning towards international markets, and thus, the definition should be broadened. Indeed, McDougall and Oviatt (2000) have expanded the scope of the definition of international entrepreneurship to be "a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behavior that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organizations."

Young et al. (2003) revolved around the application of international business theories and concepts within the realm of international entrepreneurship. They underscored the necessity for heightened emphasis on the international nature of entrepreneurship and further advocated for the integration of international business theories in conjunction with other approaches to adequately accentuate the international character of the field. Zahra and George (2002) highlighted the process of creatively discovering and utilizing opportunities that arise outside the business's local markets in order to achieve competitive advantage. They also emphasized characteristics such as the ability to explore and exploit opportunities. Lastly, the addition of the term "creativity" to the definition underscored the necessity of including innovative behavior in international entrepreneurship definitions, particularly when organizations are exploring or utilizing opportunities. Later, Oviatt and McDougall (2005:540) referred to international entrepreneurship as "the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities—across national borders—to create future goods and services." Finally, Zahra et al. (2014:138) defined the concept as follows: "the recognition, formation, evaluation, and

exploitation of opportunities across national borders to create new businesses, models, and solutions for value creation, including financial, social, and environmental aspects."

In essence, international entrepreneurship involves the proactive pursuit of opportunities across national borders, driven by innovation and risk-taking behaviors, to create value and competitive advantage, while responding to the complexities and opportunities of the global marketplace.

2.2. Network approach

The network approach, increasingly underscored in the domain of international entrepreneurship, perceives shifts in the market as outcomes of interactive changes transpiring among actors within that specific market framework (Tikkanen, 1998). Traditional models of entrepreneurial analysis often focused on individual attributes and strategic decisions. However, the contemporary landscape stresses the significance of connections, collaborations, and relationships that transcend geographical boundaries. This paradigm shift calls for a deeper understanding of the intricacies of network dynamics, social capital accumulation, and the negotiation of cultural nuances.

The network approach in international entrepreneurship highlights how interactions with various stakeholders can profoundly impact the trajectory of a venture. According to Johanson and Mattson's (1998; 2015) application of the network approach to the internationalization of businesses, the relationship network is delineated by interactions involving actors within a given network, encompassing customers, distributors, suppliers, competitors, and governmental entities. The foundational constituents of the network approach encompass proficient entities or individuals within the market, associated activities, and resources (Hakansson and Snehota, 2006). According to this theoretical framework, the relationships that businesses uphold with the actors within their affiliated networks (such as customers, suppliers, financial institutions, government agencies, and even competitors) and the resources they gain access to and reap benefits from (such as raw materials, funds, technology, knowledge, etc.) critically shape the trajectory of the business's internationalization. Consequently, actions conducted within the purview of the relationship network facilitate the establishment of connections that bolster resource access and market penetration. Furthermore, as noted by Karlsen (2007), relationships do not undergo depletion or devaluation due to usage; on the contrary, excessive utilization often amplifies their worth.

Johanson and Mattson's perspective on internationalization is rooted in viewing it as a process through which businesses discern and cultivate their stance within foreign markets by means of foreign network partners. Underpinning this viewpoint is the assumption that, as the firm embarks on internationalization, the prevalence and potency of relationship networks and business ties will escalate. By forging connections with competitors in the intended target market and permeating existing foreign networks, the firm effectively bolsters its integration into networks spanning diverse countries.

Networks or business affiliations represent a significant reservoir of market intelligence that, in the absence of such connections, would necessitate significant time and financial investment. These business connections, particularly for medium and small-scale enterprises, serve as a source of information about opportunities in foreign markets, while also playing an important role in the selection of foreign markets and the formulation of market entry strategies. In this context, networks serve as a conduit in the internationalization process (Chetty and Holm, 2000). As a result, a great deal of scholars has used network theory to investigate exploitative and explorative ventures in foreign markets within the domain of international entrepreneurship (Jones et al., 2011). Networks assist entrepreneurs in capitalizing on the potential of international markets by assisting them in seizing opportunities, gaining credibility, and fostering collaborative alliances.

2.3. Research in the scope of Türkiye

Despite the abundance of research on international entrepreneurship, the number of investigations in the Turkish context is rather limited. In the following part, several research within this domain have been summarized.

Nardallı (2015) explored new trends in international entrepreneurship, drawing insights from Turkish firms in contemporary sectors. This study offered a comprehensive overview of the entrepreneurial landscape in Türkiye, highlighting the prevalence of technology companies with a strong international outlook and

orientation. The findings emphasized that many of these firms demonstrated an entrepreneurial mindset and an inclination towards internationalization from their early stages.

Kurt and Bilge (2016) conducted a study focused on the link between international entrepreneurship and export performance. Their research investigated both small-scale and large-scale businesses in the Manisa Organized Industrial Zone. By surveying 120 participants from foreign trade departments of various firms, the study aimed to analyze the effects of international entrepreneurship activities on export market performance. The findings revealed a nuanced relationship between export market performance and the sub-dimensions of international entrepreneurship, establishing that this connection exists in various ways and strengths.

Sözüer et al. (2017) also investigated international entrepreneurship's implications for export market performance. Grounded in the resource-based view, their study proposed that international entrepreneurship, characterized as an organizational culture and distinct competence, positively influences the export performance of small firms. Drawing from a survey of 326 firms in Türkiye, the research identified product and customer focus as drivers of foreign market success. Additionally, the study introduced the concept of "new offer orientation", encompassing innovation propensity, market orientation, and employee motivation toward international markets, while acknowledging the complexities that small firms face in terms of risk assessment and cross-border business networking.

Another study exploring the interplay between international entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is Kurtulmuş et al. (2020). They analyzed the mediation effects of informal institutional frameworks within a volatile business environment. Interestingly, the findings demonstrated a negative relationship between IEO and financial performance, suggesting that the execution of IEO activities can be risky, particularly in challenging market conditions.

The proactive dimension of international entrepreneurship was the focus of Faiz and Üner's (2015) qualitative study on born global firms. Analyzing seven firms in Sakarya, the study identified factors influencing the proactive orientation of these firms. These factors, including trade fairs, knowledge sources, management characteristics, networks, and trust, were categorized under six headings, offering insights into the dimensions shaping the proactive nature of born global firms.

Similarly, Yalçın and Üner (2019) examined the innovation dimension of international entrepreneurship within born global firms. Analyzing firms across sectors in Ankara, Çorum, and Konya, the study identified four factors influencing the innovation dimension: information creation and sharing, entrepreneurship, information and communication technologies, and human resources. The findings emphasized the importance of these factors in shaping the innovation orientation of born global firms.

In the study by Yıldırım and Bilginer (2017), the focus shifted toward determining factors affecting the configuration of market strategies in international entrepreneurship. Operating within the southeastern region, the research identified nine themes under market and market-related factors that play a crucial role in establishing effective brand strategies. Entrepreneurial endeavors were seen as driving socio-economic development and emphasizing value creation through strategic approaches in global markets.

Finally, Berber (2020) investigated the network relations of SMEs for early internationalization based on social and business ties. The research examined size, power, and diversity's roles in internationalization using a multiple case study design. Results revealed that network relations, both social and business-based, help firms overcome internationalization barriers. Weak and strong ties positively impact early internationalization, contributing across areas like market identification, resource access, and trust-building.

Collectively, the reviewed studies provide an exploration of various aspects of international entrepreneurship. By delving into the proactive, innovation, and risk-taking dimensions, as well as the antecedents of performance, these examples contribute insights into the complex landscape of international business. The findings highlight the importance of understanding contextual factors, organizational culture, and strategic orientations to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the global marketplace. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that they do not adequately emphasize the significant role of cooperative behavior in international entrepreneurial activities as the network approach accentuates. The subsequent section describes the qualitative study that will explore this area.

3. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

This part outlines the research design employed in this study, which focuses on investigating inter-organizational cooperative behavior by Turkish international entrepreneurs. To explore the multifaceted aspects of this phenomenon, individual interviews with practitioners were conducted. This method offers the opportunity to gain rich insights into the subject matter, understand contextual complexities, explore personal experiences, capture the depth of the phenomenon, grasp the holistic view encompassing interpersonal dynamics, and employ qualitative data for nuanced analysis, thereby enabling comprehension of the dynamics, challenges, and practical implications of cooperative behavior in the international entrepreneurship context (Doz, 2011).

The semi-structured interview protocol facilitated in this research containing questions such as;

- Can you outline the networking approach you took when expanding into international markets?
- Apart from your overseas customers, does your business have any direct business partners (for functions such as production, sales, marketing, logistics, financing, information technology, R&D, etc.) abroad?
- If yes, how did these collaborations begin?
- If not, what are the reasons, and do you have any plans to do so?
- Have these collaborations influenced your way of conducting business?

The questions were adapted from the *international networking orientation* scale used in Dimitratos et al. (2012) and the full questionnaire was approved by Yalova University Human Research Ethics Committee with the decision dated 27.04.2022 and protocol number 2022/49.

Purposive sampling was chosen to select participants with diverse and relevant expertise, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the cooperation aspect of international entrepreneurship. In order to create a list of participants for the research, a monthly entrepreneurship-themed magazine published by a private commercial bank was scanned. Out of sixty issues from the last five years, it was determined that 56 of the 116 interviews published were related to international entrepreneurship. Contact was established with these individuals and ultimately, 12 of them volunteered to participate in the research.

The participants consisted of business owners, professionals, and practitioners, each possessing knowledge and real-world insights in the field of international business. Table 1 provides information about the participants' position within the firm and their industry.

Table 1. Interviewed Participants

Participant #	Position	Sector
1	Company Owner	International logistics
2	Company Owner	Camping & outdoor gear manufacturing
3	Company Co-founder	International logistics
4	Production & Sales Manager	Mining
5	Sales Manager	Furniture manufacturing
6	Business Development Director	Home appliances
7	Foreign Trade Manager	Ship construction
8	Product & Export Sales Manager	Building materials
9	Foreign Trade Sales Manager	Furniture manufacturing
10	Regional Commercial Director	International logistics
11	Customer Relations Manager	Auto parts manufacturing
12	Export Operations Manager	Textile machinery

The interviews were conducted during May 2022. The meetings were online, and they lasted between 20-40 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, resulting in a collective text of 10,345 words in Turkish.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data, enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns within the participants' narratives (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Several points should be noted in terms of the trustworthiness of this qualitative design (Sinkovics et al., 2008). First, purposive sampling is used to target individuals with the most relevant expertise on the subject through

scanning a large number of magazine issues over a significant time frame. Second, the interview questions were based on a validated scale related to international entrepreneurship field. Third, triangulation process was applied by comparing the findings with the contents of previously published interviews of remaining 44 experts who did not participate the research. This also helped corroborating the emerged themes (Creswell, 2013). To ensure reliability, data collection procedures were standardized by using the same interview questions, following a consistent interview protocol, and maintaining uniform recording and transcription practices. Consequently, the final coding scheme reflected the agreement of researchers.

After thorough examination, four themes emerged from the content, namely trust, communication, relational learning, and partnership development.

Conceptually, trust refers to the confidence and belief that one party has in the reliability, honesty, and competence of another. It involves a willingness to be vulnerable and dependent on the other party, based on shared values, past interactions, and perceived intentions. Communication involves the exchange of information, ideas, and messages between individuals or entities. In the context of organizations, communication is the means for conveying intentions, sharing knowledge, clarifying expectations, and maintaining transparency. Relational learning refers to the process of acquiring new knowledge, insights, and skills through interactions and relationships with others. In the context of organizations working together, relational learning involves the sharing and absorption of information, experiences, and expertise between partners (Sözüer and Semerciöz, 2019). Partnership development is the gradual process of establishing, nurturing, and strengthening collaborations between organizations toward compatible goals. It is inherent that these themes provide a foundation for working cooperations.

The total number of coded statements was 81, so the average coding per interview is nearly 7. Aggregately, the theme “trust” is represented by 13, “communication” is represented by 15, “relational learning” is represented by 16, and “partnership development” is represented by 37 statements.

The following part depicts the synthesis of the interview contents by each theme.

Trust

Trust emerges as a central theme, with one interviewee expressing the practice of placing significant trust in their chosen dealers and collaborators. The approach is to establish a strong sense of trust from the outset, thereby avoiding the need to seek additional partners once a bond is formed. This trust is considered an essential foundation upon which enduring relationships are built.

Participants stress the importance of partnering with those who possess localized expertise and cultural familiarity. This involves entrusting responsibilities to individuals or entities that possess a better understanding of specific markets and are equipped with stronger communication skills for effective collaboration.

Interestingly, the preference for dealership-based models is noted, where experts in their respective countries handle sales and research. This approach is favored over establishing foreign offices, as these local experts possess in-depth market knowledge and strategies that align with their respective regions.

Another theme revolves around the accountability of companies for their partners' actions. It is noted that issues arising from collaborations abroad are not isolated to the partner but are seen as a collective responsibility. This underscores the gravity of making informed choices when selecting partners.

The foundation of strong connections is identified as a blend of reliability, superior service, on-time deliveries, and mutual understanding. These components constitute the bedrock upon which successful collaborations are built, ensuring longevity and favorable outcomes.

The discourse acknowledges the dual nature of collaborations. While there is potential for favorable outcomes, there is also a recognition that challenges and disappointments can emerge. In one interview, the ratio of positive to negative experiences is portrayed as variable, with a 25% to 75% split between challenging and beneficial results.

Translated examples from the interview transcriptions related to the trust theme are presented below.

P6: When we created a dealer, we always trusted them and did not look for another dealer.

P9: You must establish very good connections, and these connections have to be built on very solid foundations. Reliability, good service, timely delivery, always standing behind the goods you sell, mutual understanding of each other, trying to understand each other, if you continue in this way, there is always a potential in exports, you can always go much further.

P12: Of course, there were things about these collaborations that made us very tired, upset, and lost money. We take care to work with different people, especially in the software part of the business, because people often say that we can do what they cannot do, but then it can end in great frustration.

A key insight from these conversations is the emphasis on the intersection of trust and strong relationships. It is highlighted that shared experiences and effective problem-solving within partnerships contribute to the robustness of these relationships. Challenges, such as quality assurance and transportation problems, serve as opportunities to gauge the strength of a business partnership, as overcoming these hurdles showcases the partnership's resilience. The narrative underscores the significance of trust as a cornerstone and the complexity of balancing positive and challenging outcomes in the pursuit of successful collaborations.

Communication

The importance of effective communication is highlighted through various conversations. The participants emphasize the significance of clear communication, particularly spending extensive time on conversations. Engaging with customers, thinking about one's job, and dedicating time to interactions are all viewed as pivotal for effective business relationships.

Participants note that communication methods, such as fairs were easier to navigate in the past. They underline the necessity of introducing oneself to foreign markets. Participation in fairs, both domestic and international, is valued as an opportunity to showcase the company's offerings and establish face-to-face contact, which remains important despite the shift to virtual platforms.

While face-to-face interactions are preferred, remote collaborations also play a significant role. The challenges of remote communication, especially in cross-border collaborations, are acknowledged, with a focus on the investment of time and patience required.

A common sentiment among the interviewees is the necessity of shared understanding and language. They stress the importance of speaking the same language, aligning perspectives, and conveying ideas accurately. A failure to establish this shared foundation can lead to misunderstandings and hinder collaborations.

Collaborations involve coordinating with partners in different countries. Some participants describe the practice of pretending that certain branches are their own, which helps in directing customers to the appropriate points of contact.

The dealers of a company abroad are seen as not only customers but also partners. They have their own budgets and contribute to the overall profitability of the business, especially in the European market.

The importance of understanding and adapting to the local context of the countries being collaborated with is emphasized. This includes staying informed about economic, political, and other issues that might impact the business environment. The importance of utilizing information from various sources for promoting the company is highlighted.

Effective communication requires investment in terms of time, patience, and taking partners' requests seriously. Providing clear and comprehensive information is essential to foster mutual understanding.

Below are illustrative quotes from interviews related to the communication theme.

P2: Talking is very important, you need to spend a lot of time together.

P6: It is often very difficult to establish these collaborations because no matter what happens, no matter how much English they know, in some cases one side may not even know it. Communication is very important and it takes a lot of time to ensure communication.

P10: The company in each country you arrive automatically must reflect the situations experienced to you, be it economic problems or political problems, and you must follow the agenda of that country. The war in Libya is in this direction. The

agent there informs you about this state problem and you automatically inform the shipper here, and the information flow must be maintained in a very good way.

In summary, the interview excerpts underscore the critical role of communication in inter-organizational collaborations. The discussions point out the need for shared understanding, clear communication methods, and adapting to diverse contexts. Both face-to-face and remote interactions are valued, and the investment in effective communication is considered a cornerstone for successful collaborations.

Relational learning

Participants highlight that each collaboration serves as a learning opportunity, contributing to a company's continuous innovation and knowledge-sharing practices. This, in turn, leads to the gradual maturity of the company in a disciplined and progressive manner.

A significant point that emerges is the notion that collaborations offer tangible examples for learning and development. When collaborations are executed correctly, they bolster the company's capabilities and strengths. Furthermore, the surrounding network plays a role in referring potential collaborations. This dynamic often involves starting with a business partner who then recommends other candidates from different markets, expanding the potential for collaboration.

The process of improvement is underscored as participants share how interactions with the external environment led to better practices. By participating in fairs and international events, companies refine their documentation, certification, and test results. The exposure to rigorous European standards prompts them to enhance packaging, and production methods, and align with quality norms.

Learning is also deeply connected to challenges and customer insights. Customers, who are intimately aware of their own markets, provide invaluable recommendations for product development, including new models, colors, and emerging trends. This symbiotic relationship enriches both logistics and knowledge sharing.

Moreover, the concept of sharing experiences and insights resonates with the discussion. Companies emphasize the importance of using their own experiences to navigate challenges and then disseminate these insights within their industry networks. This collaborative knowledge-sharing approach contributes to the collective growth of organizations.

The following sample quotes reflect the relational learning theme.

P6: At the same time, we learned how the product should be packaged and produced because European standards are quite high and we started to harmonize with them.

P8: As we have already said with some distributors, since we are not a company that has been exporting for 50 years, this learning phase is continuing very actively, but as we said, we can say that we learn more by living.

P9: Of course, we always learn new things from each other.

P12: We can talk to the business partners of the companies that have done this job before and get the necessary information from the other side with a conversation in the style of where you had this job done before, how you had it done, who you had it done with, and how much you had it done.

In conclusion, the interview excerpts highlight the continual learning embedded in business collaborations. These interactions not only offer insights but also drive growth and development across various dimensions of the business. The ability to harness the experiences of partners, customers, and networking opportunities is key to fostering successful collaborations and advancing the organization's growth trajectory.

Partnership development

The interview excerpts provide a comprehensive exploration of partnership development strategies between organizations. These strategies encompass various dimensions, shedding light on how businesses navigate collaboration and growth.

A common thread is the importance of strategic decision-making in areas such as carrier selection for shipments and the choice of international online marketplaces. Participants emphasize thorough evaluation and data analysis to make informed choices aligned with their company policies.

Distributorships emerge as a prominent strategy, emphasizing the significance of permanent business agreements. Understanding sales trends and addressing challenges in foreign markets are key components, as is the exploration of untapped potential in various countries. Distributorships are pivotal for growth, requiring patient investment and diversifying warehouses. Franchise models prove advantageous for market presence and networking.

Initial connections formed at fairs spark exponential growth, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between small firms and larger entities. International office establishment signifies expansion and a commitment to effective regional service.

Key players in specific markets are crucial for successful market penetration. Active partnerships are cultivated through effective communication, promotional efforts, and the establishment of sales-oriented relationships. Specific sales strategies, such as dealership arrangements and e-commerce logistics optimization, highlight the diverse nature of partnership development.

Furthermore, quality assurance and innovation are critical, emphasizing the importance of maintaining consistent production standards across multiple locations.

Below are several illustrative quotes that are related to the partnership development theme.

P3: I am trying to focus on distributorships with permanent business agreements, not just selling products, not just selling products to any country, and being done with it.

P4: The Balkans, the countries of the former Yugoslavia were the markets we targeted. We were able to follow the opportunities in these markets, we met with the important players in these markets, we met with the e-commerce giants in these markets, and we cooperated with them. In other words, if you want to play an active role in a market, you must establish business partnerships with the important players of that market.

P6: Again, as I said, it started at fairs. We met at fairs. The people we appoint in fairs explain what we do in general, they usually find us at fairs, that's how we started, then the business is already expanding and growing.

P8: There is a possibility that we may have a distributor in Romania. We are in talks, and he is slowly getting reactions from his customers and taking steps slowly. He has decided to keep stock, which is an important decision, a logic that we say is a must for distributors. We also provide all technical support.

Collectively, these insights underscore the multifaceted nature of partnership development. It seems that organizations are adapting to different market conditions and making strategic choices to foster sustainable collaboration.

4. CONCLUSION

The domain of international entrepreneurship has gained substantial attention in the context of increasing global interconnectedness and its impact on business dynamics. As markets become more integrated and technology enables cross-border interactions, organizations must adapt and innovate to exploit opportunities beyond their premises. The concept of international entrepreneurship encompasses the pursuit of opportunities across national boundaries, fueled by innovation and risk-taking behaviors, to create value in the global marketplace.

The network approach, which emphasizes the significance of relationships and collaborations transcending geographical borders, is essential in understanding the complexities of international entrepreneurship. This approach recognizes that interactions among actors within a market framework necessitate a deeper understanding of network dynamics, social capital accumulation, and cross-cultural negotiation.

In the context of Turkish international entrepreneurship, this research contributes to filling the gap by exploring the factors affecting networking behavior. The research employed a qualitative methodology involving individual interviews with practitioners. Four key themes emerged: trust, communication, relational learning, and partnership development. The discussions on trust underscored its pivotal role in building enduring relationships, fostering collaborative networks, and navigating challenges in foreign collaborations. Effective communication emerged as crucial for coordinating activities, aligning perspectives, and understanding local contexts. Relational learning highlighted the continual process of learning from collaborations, refining practices, and sharing knowledge. Partnership development strategies revealed the

diverse approaches organizations employ to foster sustainable collaborations and expand their presence in global markets.

The findings draw strength from an array of studies in the field. For example, Kontinen and Ojala (2011) and Kwon and Arenius (2010) underscore the centrality of trust in inter-organizational relationships. Musteen, Francis, and Datta (2010) and Ozgen and Baron (2007) demonstrate the importance of effective communication in entrepreneurial collaborations. Relational learning is contextualized by studies on the knowledge acquisition process conducted by Fletcher and Harris (2012) and Presutti, Boari, and Fratocchi (2007). Exploration of network interactions by Dimitratos et al. (2010) and Semrau and Werner (2014) have relevance for partnership development.

The identified themes offer insights into the dynamics of international entrepreneurial activities and the collaborative strategies employed by businesses in Türkiye. The network approach serves as a foundation for understanding how businesses can leverage relationships to enhance resource access, market penetration, and overall competitiveness. Turkish ventures must harness these themes to navigate the complexities of the global marketplace.

For practitioners, the themes offer actionable insights. Building and maintaining trust is essential for fostering successful international collaborations. Effective communication practices, both in face-to-face interactions and remote collaborations, are crucial for understanding partners' perspectives and aligning strategies. Relational learning and knowledge-sharing practices drive innovation and growth, enriching collaborations, and organizational capabilities. Partnership development strategies, encompassing distributorships, strategic alliances, and franchise models, provide avenues for market penetration and growth.

As a matter of fact, this research design has certain limitations. Firstly, it is a descriptive study based on personal discourse so there is no causal analysis of the subject matter. Additionally, the sample size of twelve participants will not fully represent the diversity of international entrepreneurial activities in Türkiye. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of findings. Future research can explore a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the representativeness of findings. Comparative studies across different industries, scales of business, and international markets could provide deeper insights into the nuances of international entrepreneurship. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of collaborations and their impact on organizational growth and performance would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Another notable issue derived from the analysis is the lack of efforts in the establishment of collaborative networks involving entities beyond the traditional scope of customers and dealers. While Turkish businesses are increasingly going abroad, the limited emphasis on forging connections with foreign stakeholders other than customers and dealers poses intriguing questions about the underlying reasons and potential ramifications. Addressing this research gap could yield multifaceted benefits. Firstly, it could provide Turkish ventures with an enhanced understanding of the advantages that diverse collaborative networks could offer, such as expanded market access, diversified knowledge pools, and innovative cross-industry synergies. Secondly, focusing on the barriers preventing the establishment of such networks could inform the development of targeted strategies to overcome these challenges. This, in turn, could lead to a more comprehensive approach to international entrepreneurship, fostering adaptability and resilience in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the significance of trust, communication, relational learning, and partnership development as cooperative behavior in the context of international entrepreneurship in Türkiye. The study also offers implications for practitioners and avenues for further exploration to advance the understanding of networking strategies and successful international business endeavors.

REFERENCES

- Allen, I. (2016). International entrepreneurship theory: Past, present and way forward. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 4(4), 93–103.
- Berber, Ş. (2020). Türkiye'deki küresel doğan işletmelerin erken uluslararasılaşmasında ağ ilişkilerinin rolü. (Doctoral thesis). Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, İstanbul.
- Bıçakçioğlu-Peynirci, N. (2020). A network perspective of international entrepreneurship within small and medium-sized firms: A review and research agenda. *METU Studies in Development*, 47, (December), 125-161.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Chetty, S. and Holm, D. B. (2000). Internationalisation of small to medium-sized manufacturing firms: A network approach. *International Business Review*, 9(1), 77-93.
- Coombs, J. E., Sadrieh, F., and Annavarjula, M. (2009). Two decades of international entrepreneurship research: What have we learned where do we go from here? *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 13, 23-64.
- Coviello, N. E., McDougall, P. P., and Oviatt, B. M. (2011). The emergence, advance and future of international entrepreneurship research — An introduction to the special forum. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(6), 625–631.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Dimitratos, P., Plakoyiannaki, E., Pitsoulaki, A., and Tüselmann, H. J. (2010). The global smaller firm in international entrepreneurship. *International Business Review*, 19, 589–606.
- Dimitratos, P., Voudouris, I., Plakoyiannaki, E., & Nakos, G. (2012). International entrepreneurial culture— Toward a comprehensive opportunity-based operationalization of international entrepreneurship. *International Business Review*, 21(4), 708-721.
- Doz, Y. (2011). Qualitative research for international business. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 42, 582-590.
- Faiz, E. and Üner, M. M. (2015). Uluslararası girişimciliğin proaktiflik boyutu: Küresel doğan işletmeler üzerine nitel bir araştırma. *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 70(4), 957-981.
- Fletcher, M. and Harris, S. (2012). Knowledge acquisition for the internationalization of the smaller firm: Content and sources. *International Business Review*, 21(4), 631-647.
- Fuentes, H. B., Hormiga, E., Miravittles, P., and Mesa, F. B. (2019). International entrepreneurship: A critical review of the research field. *European Journal of International Management*, 13(3), 381.-412.
- Giamartino, G. A., McDougall, P. P., and Bird, B. J. (1993). International entrepreneurship: The state of the field. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 18(1), 37–42.
- Hakansson, H. and Snehota, I. (2006). No business is an island: The network concept of business strategy. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 22(3), 256-270.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L.G. (1988) Internationalization in industrial systems— A network approach. Hood, N. and Vahlne, J. (Eds.), *Strategies in Global Competition*, Croom Helm, New York.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L. G. (2015). Internationalisation in industrial systems - A network approach. Forsgren, M., Holm, U., and Johanson, J. (Eds), *Knowledge, Networks and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 111-132.
- Jones, M. V., Coviello, N., and Tang, Y. K. (2011). International entrepreneurship research (1989–2009): A domain ontology and thematic analysis. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(6), 632–659.
- Karlsen, S. M. F. (2007). The born global – redefined. On the determinants of SMEs pace of internationalization, (Doctoral dissertation), BI Norwegian School of Management.

- Keupp, M. M., and Gassmann, O. (2009). The past and the future of international entrepreneurship: A review and suggestions for developing the field. *Journal of Management*, 35(3), 600–633.
- Kiss, A. N., Danis, W. M., and Cavusgil, S. T. (2012). International entrepreneurship research in emerging economies: A critical review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 27(2), 266–290.
- Kontinen, T. and Ojala, A. (2011). International opportunity recognition among small and medium-sized family firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 49, 490-514.
- Kurt, İ. And Bilge, H. (2016). The link between international entrepreneurship and export performance: Example of Manisa. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 13(3), 4685-4696.
- Kurtuluş, B. E., Katrinli, A., and Warner, B. (2020). International entrepreneurial orientation and performance of SMEs: The mediating role of informal institutional framework. *SAGE Open*, 10(4), 1-9.
- Kwon, S. W., and Arenius, P. (2010). Nations of entrepreneurs: A social capital perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(3), 315-330.
- Liesch, P. W., Welch, L. S., and Buckley, P. J. (2011). Risk and uncertainty in internationalisation and international entrepreneurship studies. *Management International Review*, 51(6), 851–873.
- Mainela, T., Puhakka, V., and Servais, P. (2013). The concept of international opportunity in international entrepreneurship: A review and a research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 16(1), 105–129.
- McDougall, P. P., and Oviatt, B. M. (2000). International entrepreneurship: The intersection of two research paths. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(5), 902–906.
- McDougall, P. P. (1989) International versus domestic entrepreneurship: New venture strategic behavior and industry structure. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 4, 387-400.
- Morrow, J. F. (1988). International entrepreneurship: A new growth opportunity. *New Management*, 3, 59–61.
- Musteen, M., Francis, J., and Datta, D. K. (2010). The influence of international networks on internationalization speed and performance: A study of Czech SMEs. *Journal of World Business*, 45(3), 197-205.
- Nardalli, S. (2015). New trends in international entrepreneurship: Insights from contemporary Turkish firms including born globals. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 7(2), 16-31.
- Oviatt, B. M. and McDougall, P. P. (1994). Towards a theory of international new ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 25(1), 45–64.
- Oviatt, B. M. and McDougall, P. P. (2005). Defining international entrepreneurship and modeling the speed of internationalization. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(5), 537–553.
- Ozgen, E. and Baron, R. A. (2007). Social sources of information in opportunity recognition: Effects of mentors, industry networks, and professional forums. *Journal of business venturing*, 22(2), 174-192.
- Presutti, M., Boari, C., and Fratocchi, L. (2007). Knowledge acquisition and the foreign development of high-tech start-ups: A social capital approach. *International Business Review*, 16(1), 23-46.
- Reuber, A. R. and Fischer, E. (2011). International entrepreneurship in internet-enabled markets. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(6), 660–679.
- Semrau, T. and Werner, A. (2014). How exactly do network relationships pay off? The effects of network size and relationship quality on access to start-up resources. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38(3), 501-525.
- Sinkovics, R. R., Penz, E., and Ghauri, P. N. (2008). Enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research in international business. *Management International Review*, 48(6), 689–714.
- Sözüer, A. and Semerciöz, F. (2019). Uluslararası ticarete işletmeler arası ilişki kalitesinin kavramsallaştırılması ve tekstil ihracatçıları üzerine bir uygulama. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi İİBF Dergisi*, 14(1), 1-24.

- Sözüer, A., Altuntaş, G., and Semerciöz, F. (2017). International entrepreneurship of small firms and their export market performance. *European Journal of International Management*, 11(3), 365-382.
- Terjesen, S., Hessels, J., and Li, D. (2013). Comparative International Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 299–344.
- Tikkanen, H. (1998). The network approach in analyzing international marketing and purchasing operations; A case study of a European SME's focal net 1992-95. *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 13(2), 10–131.
- Yalçın, A. and Üner, M. M. (2019). Uluslararası girişimcilik yöneliminin yenilikçilik boyutu: Küresel doğan işletmeler üzerine nitel bir çalışma. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 37(4), 721–745.
- Yıldırım, İ. and Bilginer, F. G. (2017). Uluslararası girişimcilikte marka stratejileri yapılandırma sürecini etkileyen pazar ve pazar yapısına bağlı faktörlerin tespitinin MAXQDA ile nitel bir değerlendirmesi. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 47, 510-532.
- Young, S., Dimitratos, P., and Dana, L. P. (2003). International entrepreneurship research: What scope for international business theories?. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 1, 31–42.
- Zahra, S. A. (1993). A conceptual model of entrepreneurship as firm behavior: A critique and extension. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 17(4), 5–21.
- Zahra, S. A. (2021). International entrepreneurship in the post Covid world. *Journal of World Business*, 56(1), 1-7.
- Zahra, S. A. and George, G. (2002). International entrepreneurship: The current status of the field and future research agenda. Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Sexton, D. L., and Camp, M. (Eds.), *Strategic Entrepreneurship: Creating an Integrated Mindset*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 255–288.
- Zahra, S. A., Newey, L. R., and Li, Y. (2014). On the frontiers: The implications of social entrepreneurship for international entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38(1), 137–158.