

ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

WENG KEAT KONG

BA. (hons) Business Studies (Hull)
MA. In Global Political Economy (Hull)
MSc. International Construction Management (Bath)
Chartered Builder, FCIQB (CIOB, UK);
Certified Fellow Builder, FACCPM (M'sia); CCPM (CIDB, M'sia), GBI Facilitator (M'sia)

**(59569) words exclude cover page, table of contents, list of
exhibits/figures, references and appendices)**

March 2025

WENG KEAT KONG

BA., MA., MSc., Chartered Builder, FCIOB (CIOB, UK);
Certified Fellow Builder, FACCPM (M'sia); CCPM (CIDB, M'sia), GBI Facilitator (M'sia)

Supervised by: Professor Dr. Fakhru Anwar Zainol

**This research was undertaken under the auspices of
the Westminster International College Malaysia, A Division of
London School of Commerce UK.**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Doctor
of Business Administration**

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David
2025**

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed : Weng Keat Kong (candidate)
Date : 6th March 2025

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed : Weng Keat Kong (candidate)
Date : 6th March 2025

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed : Weng Keat Kong (candidate)
Date : 6th March 2025

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Signed : Weng Keat Kong (candidate)
Date : 6th March 2025

ABSTRACT

Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) often fail to fully leverage the strategic value of a business networking, hindered by the lack of a comprehensive framework tailored to their needs. This study addresses this gap by proposing enrichment to entrepreneurial networking practices, building on the McKinsey 7S model. This qualitative approach's research adopting Yin's multiple case study method, semi-structured interviews with 15 entrepreneurs revealed key insights into strategies, structures, and leadership styles that strengthen successful networking. While every element of the 7S Framework is crucial, the findings highlight the importance of structural flexibility, systematic approaches, leadership and value creation through business networking were the most significant. The study adds an eighth element "Shift" which describes changes as a necessity in fast-paced dynamic and competitive business environments. This research enhances theoretical understanding of value creating networks by showing their interconnected economic, social, and strategic benefits as well as offering implications for practice and policy. Suggestions for further research include the analysis of different networking methods, the creation of structural models for sustainable platform, and the effects of leadership styles and systematic approaches using the McKinsey 7S plus 1 model on networks over time. Addressing these issues will enable competitiveness and sustainability among SMEs. The theoretical contributions of this study include integrating multiple models to advance entrepreneurial networking understanding, while practical implications provide a roadmap for Malaysian SMEs to refine their networking strategies. Addressing current limitations, such as geographical scope and sample size, in future research will further strengthen these insights. As this research demonstrates, strategic networking is crucial for success in entrepreneurship and provides small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with the tools and a networking framework to overcome problems, encourage partnerships, and achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), Entrepreneurial Networking, Strategic Networking, Structural, Systematic, Leadership, Value Creation and Networking Framework.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deep gratitude and sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Fakhrol Anwar Zainol, for his professional guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my dissertation. I am also grateful to several of my lecturers, including Dr. Lester Massingham, Dr. Harvinder, and Dr. Vincent Tan, served as my course lecturers and tutors, for generously giving me their valuable time, which contributed significantly to the success of the Doctorate program.

Meanwhile, I would like to express my appreciation to my elder brother, Ir. Dr. Weng Keong Kong, who supported me in everything along this journey. More importantly, I also feel thankful for my family members' support as well. Furthermore, great appreciation goes to the survey respondents for their participation, valuable feedback, and comments that led to the aimed research answers. Notably, to my fellow BNI members and JFBA members who not only participated in the research survey but also provided me with useful information about networking, from which I have gained so much.

Also, I would like to pay tribute to my late father, Mr. Kong Khin, who passed away during the first term of my doctorate study. Papa, I finally made it happen after 7 years of struggling in this challenging period during and post-pandemic era. Another tribute goes to my very special friend Sean Chua, who passed away in 2016. Your physical presence may not have been there throughout my doctorate studies, but your spirit remains and makes me strong. And lastly, special thanks to my mum, my younger sister Amy, my younger brother Calix, my sister-in-law Pauline, my nephew and niece Frederick and Zhi Han, and Jeff for their relentless encouragement to chase my next graduation date so they can attend my graduation ceremony.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
COVER PAGE	1
ABSTRACT	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS	6-9
LIST OF EXHIBITS	10-11
LIST OF FIGURES	12
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 Background of the study	13-20
1.2 Problem Statement	20-23
1.2.1.1 Internal Environmental Barriers to SME Networking	23-24
1.2.1.2 Absence of A Systematized Entrepreneurial Networking Model	24-25
1.2.1.3 Inadequate Digital and Professional Networking Proficiency	25-26
1.2.1.4 Organizational Resistance to Digital Networking	26
1.2.1.5 Financial Constraints Hindering Networking Efforts	27
1.2.2.1 External Environmental Challenges in SME Networking	28-30
1.2.2.2 Limitations of Digital Networking and the Divide in Infrastructure	31-32
1.2.2.3 Decline of Trust in Online Networking for Business Purposes	32
1.2.2.4 Business Recovery and Networking Resilience after the Pandemic	33
1.2.2.5 Little Participation in International and Regional Business Networks	33-34
1.2.3 Conclusion	34-35
1.3 Research Gap	36
1.3.1 Lack of Integrative and Structural Framework for Entrepreneurial Networking for SMEs	36
1.3.2 Limited Knowledge Concerning the Contribution of Digital Networking to the Development Policies of SMEs	36
1.3.3 The Examination of SME Networking Problems in Malaysia is Insufficient	37
1.3.4 The Gaps in Business Networking Engagement Trust and Quality	37
1.3.5 The Resilience of SME Networking During the COVID-19 Period	38
1.3.6 Conceptual Gaps in Business Networking by SMEs Using the McKinsey 7S Framework	38
1.3.7 Closing The Gap in Research	38-40
1.4 Research Objectives	40-42
1.5 Research Questions	42-43
1.6 Research Scope	44-45
1.7 Significance of The Study	45-46
1.8 Organization of The Thesis	47-48

1.9 Conclusions	49
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW	50
2.1 Introduction	50-52
2.2 The Role of SMEs in Malaysia’s Economic Development	52-60
2.3 SMEs and Entrepreneurial Development in Malaysia: A Strategic Perspective	60-62
2.4 Entrepreneurial Networking	62-63
2.4.1 Entrepreneurial Networking as part of Social Networking	63-64
2.4.2 Critical Analysis: Challenges and Opportunities in Entrepreneurial Networking	64-65
2.4.3 Implications for Entrepreneurial Practice	65-66
2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Entrepreneurial Network in Malaysia	66-69
2.6 The Importance of Entrepreneurial Networking	69-71
2.7 Critical Success Factors for SMEs in Networking	71
2.7.1 An Overview	71-76
2.7.2 Discussions and Critiques	76-78
2.8 Entrepreneurial Networking Model/Framework	78
2.8.1 Introduction	78-79
2.8.2 Use of McKinsey 7S Framework for Core Research Analysis Over ANT & MNT	80
2.8.3 The Actor’s Network Theory	81-83
2.8.3.1 A Critical Review: Comparing McKinsey 7S to ANT	83-84
2.8.4 The Market as Network Theory	84-87
2.8.4.1 A Critical Review: Comparing McKinsey 7S to MNT	87-89
2.8.5 McKinsey 7S Framework	89-90
2.8.5.1 Conclusion: Why McKinsey 7S is a Preferred Model for Assessing Entrepreneurial Networking Framework in Malaysian SMEs	90-92
2.9 Adoption of McKinsey 7S Framework for Research Analysis and Its Relevance	92-93
2.10 Social Network Theory as Underpinning Theory	94
2.10.1 The Entrepreneurial Network Perspective	94-99
2.10.2 The Social Network Theory and Its Relevance with McKinsey 7S	99-101
2.11 Research Model	101-105
2.12 Conclusions	105-108
CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	109
3.1 Introduction	109
3.2 Research Design	109
3.2.1 Qualitative Research	109-111
3.3 The Case Study Approach	111-112
3.3.1 Types of Case Studies	112-114
3.3.2 Designs of Case Studies	114-117

3.3.2.1 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions and Objectives	117-120
3.3.2.2 Questionnaire Design	120-123
3.4 Sampling Design (Sampling Frame)	123
3.4.1 Rationale for 15 Respondents in Qualitative Research	124-127
3.4.2 Unit of Analysis	127-128
3.5 Data Analysis	128-129
3.6 Case Study Protocol	129-130
3.6.1 Site Meeting/Virtual Meeting	130-131
3.6.2 Arranging Interviews	131-132
3.6.3 Conducting Interviews	132
3.6.4 Verbatim	133
3.6.5 Data Analysis	133-135
3.7 Ethical Consideration	136
3.8 Conclusions	137
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND FINDINGS	138
4.1 Introduction	138
4.2 Response Rate	138-139
4.3 Profile of Respondents	139-143
4.4 Report Analysis Data using Atlas. ti Software	143-144
4.5.1 Co-relation of Interview Questions Matching with Research Objectives and Questions	144-145
4.5.2 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions	146-148
4.6 Introduction and Summary of Findings	149
4.6.1 Interview Question 1: What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?	152
4.6.1.1 Summary of Interview Question 1	152-155
4.6.1.2 Discussion of Findings 1	156-162
4.6.1.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 1	163-165
4.6.2 Interview Question 2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?	165
4.6.2.1 Summary of Interview Question 2	166-168
4.6.2.2 Discussion of Findings 2	169-172
4.6.2.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 2	172-177
4.6.3 Interview Question 3: How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help?	177
4.6.3.1 Summary of Interview Question 3	178-181
4.6.3.2 Discussion of Findings 3	182-183
4.6.3.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 3	184-187
4.6.4 Interview Question 4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?	187
4.6.4.1 Summary of Interview Question 4	188-192

4.6.4.2 Discussion of Findings 4	193-199
4.6.4.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 4	199-202
4.6.5 Interview Question 5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization?	203
4.6.5.1 Summary of Interview Question 5	203-207
4.6.5.2 Discussion of Findings 5	208-210
4.6.5.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 5	211-213
4.6.6 Interview Question 6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?	214
4.6.6.1 Summary of Interview Question 6	214-217
4.6.6.2 Discussion of Findings 6	218-221
4.6.6.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 6	221-224
4.6.7 Interview Question 7: What's the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications?	224
4.6.7.1 Summary of Interview Question 7	224-227
4.6.7.2 Discussion of Findings 7	228-232
4.6.7.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 7	232-234
4.6.8 Interview Question 8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work?	234
4.6.8.1 Summary of Interview Question 8	235-237
4.6.8.2 Discussion of Findings 8	238-241
4.6.8.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 8	241-245
4.7 Conclusions	246-247
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS	248
5.1 Introduction	248
5.2 Discussion	249-258
5.3 Discussion on Recapitulation of Study (Summary of Findings)	258-282
5.4 Contributions of the Study	282
5.4.1 Theoretical Contributions	282-289
5.4.2 Practical Contributions	289-295
5.5 Limitations of Study	295-296
5.6 Recommendations for Future Research	297-299
5.7 Conclusions and Recommendations	299-305
REFERENCES	306-376
WEB REFERENCES	377
APPENDICES	378-404

LIST OF EXHIBITS

	Page
Exhibit 1.1: Model Created by Hussain et al. (2024)	28
Exhibit 1.2: Annual Percentage Change of SMEs GDP by Kind of Economy Activity for 2018-2020	30
Exhibit 1.3: 7S Elements: Hard S & Soft S	41
Exhibit 1.4: Conceptual Design of Entrepreneurial Networking Model	43
Exhibit 2.1: Comparison of Malaysia GDP, MSMEs' GDP and Non-MSME GDP and Overall GDP Growth (%)	54
Exhibit 2.2: SME GDP, Non-SME GDP and Overall GDP Growth in the past 20 years (%)	56
Exhibit 2.3: Value and Growth Rate of Malaysia's MSMEs' GDP at Constant 2015 Prices	57
Exhibit 2.4: MSEMS Vs non-MSMEs Growth in (%)	58
Exhibit 2.5: Value of SME GDP and Overall GDP (Constant 2015 Prices)	59
Exhibit 2.6: SME Employment, Non-SME Employment and Overall Employment Growth (%)	60
Exhibit 2.7: BNI's Core Values and Chapters Location Globally	70
Exhibit 2.8: Influence of networks on small professional business services' marketing	73
Exhibit 2.9: Key Success Factors for SMEs	75
Exhibit 2.10: Key Comparisons of MNT and McKinsey 7S Framework	86
Exhibit 2.11: Nodes And Links in Network Perspective	95
Exhibit 2.12: A Comparison of Network Approaches 1	97
Exhibit 2.13: A Comparison of Network Approaches 2	98
Exhibit 2.14	103

Preliminary Conceptual Model in Entrepreneurial Networking	
Exhibit 3.1: Case Study Designs	116
Exhibit 3.2: Targeted Respondents	124
Exhibit 3.3: Qualitative Research Flow	129
Exhibit 4.1: Response Rate	139
Exhibit 4.2: Percentage and Frequency of Respondents' Profile	141
Exhibit 4.3: Summary of Research Findings	151
Exhibit 4.4: Summary of Research Question 1	153
Exhibit 4.5: Summary of Research Question 2	167
Exhibit 4.6: Summary of Research Question 3	179-180
Exhibit 4.7: Summary of Research Question 4	190
Exhibit 4.8: Summary of Research Question 5	205
Exhibit 4.9: Summary of Research Question 6	215-216
Exhibit 4.10: Summary of Research Question 7	226

TABLE OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1: The Impacts of the Strategies Entrepreneurial Networking	155
Figure 4.2: The Structure of a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking	168
Figure 4.3: Success Factors of Entrepreneurial Networking Model	181
Figure 4.4: The type of leadership is preferred in networking	192
Figure 4.5: Motivational Factors for Business Networking	207
Figure 4.6: Critical Success Factors for Business Networking	217
Figure 4.7: Most Important Core Values in Entrepreneurial Networking	227
Figure 4.8: Proposed an Entrepreneurial Networking Model	237
Figure 4.9: Summary of Results: A Proposed Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking Framework	245

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in driving Malaysia's economic growth, fostering technological advancements, and generating employment opportunities. They are integral to the modern, interconnected business landscape, offering essential goods and services that cater to the needs of both local and international supply chains (UNDP, 2024). It was reported that these enterprises exported 17.5 percent of total products while attributed 48 percent of job opportunities and make up of 97.4 percent of total business entities in Malaysia (SME Corporation Malaysia Annual Report, 2022). In the aftermath of the covid pandemic, it is vital that these SMEs are strengthened as Malaysia is actively trying to regain its global market stance. The report shown it is evident that SMEs are important building blocks within the Malaysian economy as they provide high value services at low costs with a great return on investment. According to the SME Corporation Malaysia Annual Report (2022), given the global situation, Malaysia sees the importance of SMEs to expand its growth and development. Thus, the government has initiated plans which facilitate MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and create favourable conditions so that these businesses are able to succeed in the global market. However, SMEs are required to allocate proper resources efficiently with the help of the government in providing them funding and adequate training with the necessary tools and platforms. In short, the government aim is to develop a dynamic environment for MSMEs, equipping them with greater competency, agility, and resilience to achieve sustainable global

competitiveness. In the Malaysian context, SME development remains paramount for the government moving forward.

The Malaysian government also wants to help the SMEs in fostering greater challenges that can be tapped into by establishing innovative MSEMs and applying solutions in tune with the trends, so that there is an SME national readiness for strong competition ahead in the future.

Despite their significant contributions, SMEs face numerous challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability and making it difficult for them to scale. These challenges include limited access to financing, intense market competition and the pressures of adapting to a rapidly changing technological and economic environment. Entrepreneurial networking has emerged as a strategic way to address these challenges. Awang et al. (2022) perceive entrepreneurial networking as a solution to strategize these difficulties, and it gives limited resource, business opportunities and market intelligence especially for SMEs. They suggest that "entrepreneurial networks act as lifelines for SMEs, enabling them to use shared resources and insight to overcome barriers." As what the researcher intends to pursue, this argument makes the suitability of the research goals feasible and offers wider research opportunities for academic achievement.

Among the major constraints the Malaysian SME facing is inadequate access to finance. Together with rising inflation and cost of living, significantly hindering factors for SMEs were reported in Selangor Journal (2024). 28 percent of SMEs face cash flow deficits while 23 percent of SMEs having revenue generation stagnation problem were reported as a pressing issue. 48 percent of SMEs in the survey conducted in 2023 rated these issues as their top concerns. Progress oriented measures, such as advanced

technological adoptions, human resource training and development, as well as networking that entails access to a pool of potential finance options are the activities that the SMEs are unable to participate effectively. As what Mohd Hidzir et al. (2024) highlight that "the lack of accessible financing mechanisms continue to undermine SMEs' capacity to complete in an increasingly resource-intensive market". While financial cost for SMEs is highly sensitive however, in contrary, also highly motivated too if entrepreneurial networking proven to be profitability returnable.

Awang et al. (2022) asserting that SMEs are quick to restrict insensible expenses while looking for maximized profit return from all their investments. Cultural standards alongside local customs are intertwined and remain interdependent when it comes to determining the networking practices for SMEs in Malaysia. Traditionally, SMEs in Malaysia rely heavily on personal networks for business engagement where they have been comfortable with, which in turn grows their aversion to meeting new business contacts. These relations are based on faith and existing relationships too, which in turn makes it hard for one to utilize alternate business opportunities.

In the opinion of Awan et al. (2022) are adamant that "while close-knit relationships offer initial business security, they can restrict opportunities for innovation and broader collaboration." This is a double-edge sword because remaining comfortable may mean some business opportunities go unexplored and under-estimated as well as the digital divide in advanced technologies adoption are likely to compound the issues of SMEs.

According to The Star (2019), there are only 32 percent of SMEs that have taken the initiative of going digital by the year 2024. It was also reported that for some rural areas where the internet and employee digital literacy were insufficient too. In pertaining to

digital transformation in Malaysia, Fitriany et al. (2023) observed that, "is no longer optional but essential for SMEs to remain competitive in the global economy." As business today is residue of the post pandemic world and as such the changes are increasingly becoming visible.

The importance of SME to the economy of Malaysia is debatable but the need for these SMEs to build a strong network and business relationships has also been emphasized throughout which are dire for sustainability as well as growth (Ali et al., 2018). Networking for entrepreneurs has been regarded as important for success for SMEs in Malaysia. There is also a level of competitiveness and performance that can be increased by networking, because access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities that would otherwise be unattainable is possible. It has been discovered, however, that the SMEs in Malaysia lack of formal school-business education and understanding in utilizing social networks effectively, that may hamper their entrepreneurship capabilities according to Umbaris et al. (2020). Moreover, the limited ability to build and leverage network also have been identified as a key impediment for SMEs in Malaysia to achieve greater economies of scale, so to allow SMEs to compete in the global market with better competencies and more importantly to help them overcome domestic and international challenges as referred by Umbaris et al. (2020).

The dissertation seeks to develop and suggest an overarching Entrepreneurial Networking Framework that will assist Malaysian SMEs in cultivating and utilizing their networking skills. Noting the importance of networking for the growth and development of SMEs, the framework draws from a review of relevant literature (Lee et al., 2021). It further sets out a forward and operational approach by identifying the critical gaps in factors, processes, and outcomes associated with entrepreneurial

networking in Malaysian SMEs, enabling these enterprises to improve their networking abilities and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Entrepreneur Networking organized strategy facilitates the achievement of structural and resource-based opportunities for SMEs. With the participation of these mechanisms, primary resources, knowledge of the industry, and innovative collaboration which fosters competitiveness can be attained. This is the reason Rahman et al. (2020) state that “entrepreneurial networks are not only a resource of tangible assets, but serve as tools for clever processes, solving problems, and even expanding business activities.” Through these robust networks, SMEs can reach stakeholders like suppliers, clients, and peers and form partnerships that improve their growth potential.

World Bank (2021) states, “in emerging markets, where there are resource and market volatility constraints, strategic networking is important for SMEs.” Networking allows SMEs to also build dynamic capabilities like business adaptability, innovation, and adaptability, as well as strategic foresight which are requirements to thrive in such unpredictable business landscapes.

This research seeks to fill the very important gap in understanding the context of entrepreneurial networking in Malaysia SMEs. The study pursues three primary objectives: To check the extent of entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs, identify the impact of entrepreneurial networking towards their growth and sustainability, and determine the application of McKinsey 7S Model in entrepreneurial networking, while highlighting the most significant determinants of SME performance. The McKinsey 7S model, which was developed by Waterman and Peters and Phillips (1980), is one of the renowned models for organizational analysis. The model has seven

internal interdependent factors – strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style and staff – which help to explain the SMEs’ networking behaviours in regard to internal and external SME’s factors. This study tries to understand the complexity of entrepreneurial networking relations by utilizing the framework along with social network theory, which focuses on flows of resources through relationships within networks. The results should allow Malaysian SMEs, policymakers, and academic researchers to benefit from the research findings.

Employing Yin’s (2018) multiple case study approach, this study takes data from formal interviews with 15 SME business owners from various industries. The research uncovers a number of very important factors which enable effective networking. These factors are: organizational structures that allow SMEs to adapt to varying and emergent market conditions, leadership-initiated networking, where leaders take an active role in promoting collaboration, culture that supports sustained networking, and technology facilitated networking, where SMEs using digital methods for communication and relationship building report better efficiency and increased market penetration.

The research suggests further that SMEs must be selective and deliberate in building their networks to ensure that strong relationships are formed with peers, suppliers and customers. Through the study, however, it has become evident that networking has to be integrated to the overall strategy and competitive positioning of the firm, underscoring the point that networking within SMEs has to be more purposeful and aggressive. This research also suggests a conceptual framework for entrepreneurial networking that can help Malaysian SMEs to formulate and maintain strong networks for development and competitive edge.

This research puts forth a specific entrepreneurial networking framework that caters to Malaysian SME businesses by integrating a comprehensive strategy novel coined as "Shift" that is placed on top of what is known as the McKinsey 7S model. This shift heavily rests on constant environmental adaptation and a firm's resilience to improve continuously on a plethora of different aspects. Additional networking components that need to be achieved and pursued include aligning networking with long-term organizational objectives and formulating flexible systems designed for active participation communications, cooperation and data exchange, as well as trust and collaboration through a strongly developed culture, enhancement of competencies such as digital and relationship management, promotion of engagement and innovation oriented leadership, as well as training and tools that enable employees to maintain the ever changing and delicate interpersonal organizational networks. The shift emphasizes the importance of multi directional re-evaluation and repositioning for SMEs to remain competitive within turbulent markets.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding entrepreneurial networking in several ways. This study serves as a basis to define the operational networking strategies and issues that Malaysian SMEs deal with, as well as fill an existing literature gap. Based on the existing McKinsey framework, this study also contributes by developing a holistic entrepreneurial networking model that incorporates the social network theory concepts. This study accentuated the importance of the "Shift" dimension which encapsulates adaptability and resilience as a new addition to the entrepreneurial networking discourse which is novel in this discourse.

In closing, Malaysian SMEs stand to benefit from the findings of this research because it allows SMEs to strategically hone and maintain entrepreneurial networks to increase employability and competitiveness.

This statement can be made stronger by citing earlier arguments. By integrating the McKinsey framework with social network theory, the study contributes to the understanding of networking phenomenon in SMEs as well as sheds light on how to include SMEs that lack financial and technological capital. SME owners should be encouraged to adopt a more strategic view and investment stances towards feeling competitive and capable.

As John Donne said "No man is an island,"¹ which illustrates that working together is crucial to success. This is particularly true in the entrepreneurial world, where innovation and growth are built on meaningful relationships fostered through networking (Donne, n.d.). By placing entrepreneurial networking at the heart of resiliency, this study offers practical strategies for SMEs to meet challenges head-on and thrive in a highly dynamic business world.

1.2 Problem Statement

As discussed, SMEs are very crucial to the growth of Malaysia's economy, particularly in the areas of employment, innovation and GDP growth (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). Even though business networking has been recognised and accepted

¹ The quote "No man is an island" comes from Meditation XVII by the English poet John Donne. It is part of his work devotions upon Emergent Occasions, written in 1624. The full passage reads:

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

Donne uses this metaphor to convey the idea that humans are interconnected, and that each person's life affects others. This phrase has since become a widely recognized statement on the nature of human relationships and community. Access via <https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/meditation17.php> on 1st February 2024.

popularly as a strategy for sustaining and growing their businesses, however, still a large number of Malaysian SMEs are unable to take advantage of popular networking opportunities because of low levels of digital literacy, reluctance to change, and poor technological support (Hussain et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2023). No doubt that the adoption of digitalization has enabled SMEs to engage in a myriad of networking opportunities, but these are not fully capitalized on due to limitation of financial resources, absence of comprehensive training modules that can be tailored to their needs, and poor participation in networking and knowledge base adults learning (Mustafa et al., 2021; Sundah et al., 2021). And more importantly, lacking the knowledge in leveraging effective networking and also missing the knowledge in assessing its effectiveness.

Based on the previous arguments, it seems that sector SMEs in Malaysia are still incline with traditional approaches like attending face-to-face industry events instead of using the internet or a more professional networking platforms that can reach a larger market (Ogbe & Orodriyo, 2018; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This strategy makes it difficult for them to take advantage of global networking opportunities and lowers their competitiveness in the market. In addition, the majority of SMEs have a problem distinguishing between genuine business contacts and casual contacts in networking which greatly disseminates the networking potential according to Husain et al. (2023) and Suryawati et al. (2023). Moreover, Rahman et al. (2023) also highlighted his concerns in cyber security in information breach, bogus bank accounts, and untrusted business networks further diminish trust towards digital networking which complicates the level of confidence for SMEs in building networking relationships.

According to Husain et al. (2023), one of the major contributors to innovation and to the country's GDP in Malaysia is the sector of entrepreneurs or owners from SMEs.

Business networking has become one of the tools utilized by SMEs as a resultant of globalization which helps them to generate more business and also seek out for potential outsource services. Unfortunately, several economic challenges have prevented this potential from being fully utilized, which is the reason why there is a need to investigate this through academic research. This research explores the social network's structure for SMEs in Malaysia and seeks to understand the underlying obstacles that constrain their growth and the possibilities for strategic action that can benefit business partnerships both regionally and internationally irrespective of the scale or location of the business.

Even with the ever-growing importance networking has for entrepreneurs, there has not been extensive research in SMEs in Malaysia that combines digital networking, resource sharing, and systematic skill development (Corner et al., 2017; Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Renko et al. (2021) suggest that the McKinsey 7S Framework, which focuses on Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Skills, Style and Staff, arguably provides an avenue to address those issues. Still, there are scant studies of this framework and SME networking. This creates a fundamental gap in understanding how Malaysian SMEs can systematically improve their networking strategies for growth.

Networking offers assistance to SMEs' development, innovation, and sustainability by helping to form and maintain strategic business alliances, accessing markets, and obtaining financial resources (Hussain et al., 2024). Unfortunately, Malaysian SMEs are persistently unable to utilize networking opportunities, which severely affects their competitiveness on domestic and international levels.

The existing research is deficient in a more holistic approach that combines internal and external environments determining SME networking. It appears that while some researchers acknowledge networking as a prerequisite for success, they do not consider obstacles SMEs encounter due to their internal organizational setting and the external environment (Mustafa et al., 2021; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Thus, this research identifies both internal and external environmental determinants of SME networking and examines how a particular networking model, like entrepreneurial networking model using McKinsey's 7S as assessment tool, can be used to improve networking efficiency.

At last, this gap will be closed by this research using the McKinsey's 7S Framework to create an all-encompassing entrepreneurial networking model suitable for Malaysian SMEs. The researcher in this study attempts to analyse the development of current phenomenon in networking with inclusivity and the strategic alignment of the 7S dimensions to offer actionable insights to the policymakers, industry practitioners, and SME actors. The goal is to allow Malaysian SMEs to build strong networking systems that will encourage innovations and improve overall competitiveness on the regional and global scales.

1.2.1.1 Internal Environmental Barriers to SME Networking

Internal environmental issues are those that stem from the organizational and structural aspects of SMEs which limit their networking capability. These issues emanate from the overarching business strategies, internal processes, skills, and resource limitations that define the networking potential of SMEs.

The issue is primarily on the side of many SME entrepreneurs who do not recognize that business networking support is critical for achieving long term business growth (Misner, 2017). The holistic and ambiguous business landscape, alongside Industry 4.0's sophisticated technology, has complicated old entrepreneurial networking customs. Balanced and sustainable entrepreneurial activities have also been outshined by the new unpredictability. In Misner (2017)'s context, networking is meant to create and develop new business prospects through the goodwill cultivated within the network. For this objective to be accomplished, a clear and proper networking framework should be planted in place. Social networking should be considered an invaluable skill that can be utilized across various fields, as opposed to being restricted to a singular outdated approach. It is without a doubt that better opportunities for competition can be created through experienced entrepreneurial networking. If companies understand the importance of entrepreneurial business networking in documenting milestones and value creation, then they will regard the neglect of regular networking activities as a bane of business failure. Those who continuously endeavor to attain regular milestones need and will outperform the ones that choose not to connect with the industry (Misner, 2018).

1.2.1.2 Absence of A Systematized Entrepreneurial Networking Model

Many Malaysian SMEs actively use networking in their business activities, but in a way that is unorganized, resulting in ineffective business relationships, poor strategic fit, and suboptimal growth (Hussain et al., 2024). An unmanaged networking paradigm is illustrative of the absence of a standardized networking model which, in turn, has resulted in the slow adoption of proactive reactive networking strategies SMEs can make use of (Renko et al., 2021). While The McKinsey 7S Framework does offer a more

manageable approach to networking, there is little literature concerning its use in the SME context.

The context of business networking in the Malaysia SME market raises issues that can be peripheral as well as central within a single examination. Business networking, which is considered critical for entrepreneurial achievement, is presented as a means of expanding networks, establishing credibility, and promoting them. Contrary to this, literature has pointed out the lack of research that integrates network variety, knowledge exchange, and resource supplementation in the context of Malaysian SMEs.

1.2.1.3 Inadequate Digital and Professional Networking Proficiency

Often, SMEs do not possess some necessary skills such as relationship management, negotiation, or even digital networking which enables them to build meaningful business networks (Sundah et al., 2021). The majority of owners of SMEs are having issues with a knowledge 'gap' in terms of information technology which impedes their ability to use online networking tools for the purpose of business growth (Rahman et al., 2023). Moreover, without proper mentorship and training the situation does not improve and many SMEs cannot turn networking into a business skill (Mustafa et al., 2021).

Ogbe and Orodriyo's research (2018) outlines the benefits that come from business networking for an entrepreneurial, however, neglected to explain the reasons and ways which limit SMEs' networking capacity particulars. More than one study, including by Husain et al. (2023), Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), Mustafa et al. (2021), Rahman et al. (2023) have put forward numerous challenges emanating from entrepreneurial

networking, and as a whole indicate the need to conduct more detailed studying concerning networking strings for SMEs in Malaysia.

1.2.1.4 Organizational Resistance to Digital Networking

Many SMEs are still dependent on face-to-face networking, and reluctance to adopt digital business networking tools as a buffer against the impacts of digitalisation (Putra et al., 2022). Such resistance is usually a product of organizational culture, an unwillingness to change, and a deficient appreciation of the potential benefits of digital networking (Suryawati et al., 2023). Because of this, SMEs are unable to take advantage of opportunities that lie in the digital networking space, which would have improved their connections with investors, suppliers, and customers.

Further, as mentioned by Mustafa et al. (2021), one core concept that was mentioned was network scope and was unfortunately left unstated in regard to what hurdles are preventing SMEs from expanding their scales. Nevertheless, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) also lament the absence of information dissemination towards SMEs, which overlooks the importance of diversified networks for the purpose of knowledge acquisition. These issues underline the necessity for comprehensive studies exploring the problems and the facilitators of effective knowledge sharing and network development in the Malaysia's context.

Furthermore, communication problems highlighted by Rahman et al (2023) suggest the need to assess their wider consequences on the innovativeness of Malaysian SMEs in relation to communication and knowledge uptake and the innovation process.

1.2.1.5 Financial Constraints Hindering Networking Efforts

Most SMEs are financially constrained due to scarce of resources. They cannot afford subscriptions to excessive networking tools, premium business networks, or industry conferences (Rahman et al., 2023). Unlike larger corporations, SMEs live on a shoelace budget which makes it impossible for them to fund strategic networking activities. As a consequence, these SMEs are unable to keep pace with the better resourced businesses that effectively use business networking as a marketing tool. (Renko et al., 2021)

While resource-centric collaboration is highly regarded by Mustafa et al. (2021), more effort has to be put towards understanding the limitations of platform effectiveness in order to improve the collaborative scenario of Malaysian SMEs. Hussain et al. (2024) cited Pakistan as one example and made a particular model to investigate the interacting effects of business networking, finance availability, and access to business information on performance. They used statistical analysis software and tested five hypotheses, discovering a strong positive correlation for business information with networking, financing, and performance outcome. As a developing country with lower income economies, theirs SME access to finance was foremost crucial. Alongside that, effective business networking was linked with better financial performance as the end result. Such information is very important for the researcher to focus on the business information, networking, and availability of the funding.

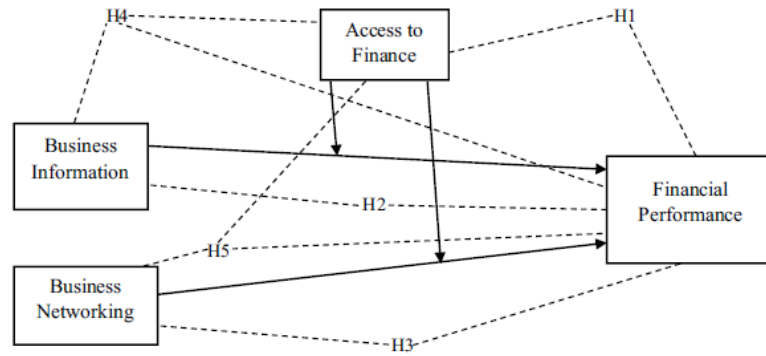


Exhibit 1.1: Model created by Hussain et al. (2024)

1.2.2.1 External Environmental Challenges in SME Networking

These obstacles include the ever-changing market environment, the shift to digital ecosystems, low levels of trust, and multi-faceted regulatory frameworks. More often than not, these networks aid and control the participation of SMEs in the regional or global networking frameworks, which is a restriction in the opportunities or lack of enabling environment that SMEs face.

In essence, addressing these critical gaps requires a comprehensive study integrating network diversity, knowledge dissemination, resource-sharing, and communication challenges within the entrepreneurial networking model. Such an investigation would provide workable insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and academics aiming to enhance Malaysian SMEs' networking capabilities and with the ultimate goals to drive sustainable growth in the digital age. Adaptation is paramount in these efforts, as planning often struggles to keep pace with evolving changes. Entrepreneurs within the business domain persistently grapple with a myriad of challenges, spanning external elements such as competitive forces and internal structural issues, notably those pertaining to issues with staffing and inherent operational systems aligned with the nature of their enterprises.

Takes for instance, the global COVID-19 pandemic has presented one of the worst prevailing challenges confronting businesses throughout the current decade; the pandemic affected Malaysia extensively from early 2020 to December 2022 (Rokom, 2022), exerting a substantial impact on business entities, particularly SMEs, and resulting in numerous closures. Its effects on SMEs are pronounced, with diminished revenues attributable to social restrictions, office closures, workforce reductions, layoffs, salary reductions, and truncated working hours, arising from reduced production and demand (Rahman, 2022). Malaysian SMEs, particularly those with limited capital, have grappled with a range of business's difficulties, including reduced sales, impediments in raw material procurement, bottlenecks in supply-chain, limited financial resources and disruptions in production and operation.

The imposition of Movement Control Order (MCO) restrictions has posed additional challenges, especially for SMEs, necessitating an abrupt transition from traditional face-to-face transactions to online modalities. SMEs have had to strategize and implement novel approaches for survival. Despite a gradual increase in the recovery rate from the COVID-19 pandemic, sustained recuperation is anticipated, particularly if the pandemic continues to impact the economic sector (Suryawati et al., 2023). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, a pronounced reduction in revenue was observed across various SME industries from 2019 to 2020. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020), the service sector experienced a notable decline of -9.2%, the construction sector witnessed a substantial decrease of -15.4%, the manufacturing sector recorded a decrease of -2.9%, the mining and quarrying sector saw a reduction of -7.1%, and the agricultural sector registered a marginal decrease of -0.3%. In aggregate, an overall decline of -7.3% was documented, leading to financial constraints for numerous SMEs,

due to concerns over employee remuneration and operational sustainability (Akmal & Arifa, 2023).

Several factors have contributed to declining SME revenue, including: 1) social restrictions, such as lockdowns in various regions and cities, impacting operational capabilities and customer accessibility; 2) diminished purchasing power, leading to reduced demand for SME products; 3) disruptions in distribution channels; 4) an uncertain economic landscape for SMEs; and 5) unpredictable income scenarios, resulting in sluggish demand for non-essential products or services.

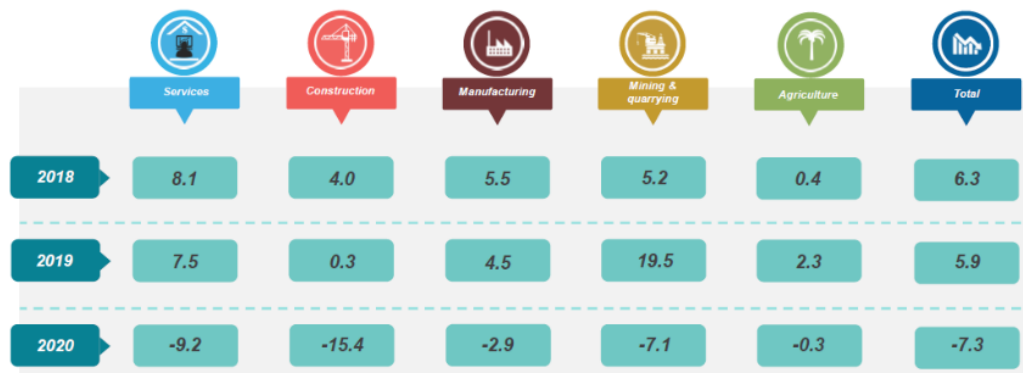


Exhibit 1.2: Annual Percentage Change of SMEs GDP by Kind of Economy Activity for 2018-2020, Cited from <https://www.dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/small-and-medium-enterprises-smes-performance-2020>

1.2.2.2 Limitations of Digital Networking and the Divide in Infrastructure

According to Suryawati et al. (2022), the digital divide remains one of the primary obstacles to entrepreneurial networking in Malaysia, especially in rural and developing areas. Rahman et al. (2022) further noted that SMEs in rural areas suffer from poor internet connectivity, inadequate digital infrastructure, and slow internet speeds, all of which worsen the prospects of online networking. As a result, a significant number of SMEs fall out of the digital business ecosystems which prevents them from growing their operations outside local boundaries.

During this timeframe, numerous SMEs recognized the significance of embracing digitalization to address prevailing challenges. Concurrently, governmental guidance encouraged SMEs to venture into e-commerce. A notable trend emerged as many adopted e-wallet tools such as "touch and go," "pay wave," or other electronic transfer methods for transactions. This trend catalysed the expansion of the e-commerce sector, exemplified by platforms like Lazada and Shopee. Additionally, industries supporting such e-businesses – particularly logistic services facilitating Business-to-Consumer (B to C) deliveries – experienced significant growth during the pandemic.

However, digitalized initiatives demand a requisite level of digital literacy and competence. Developing such programs has proven intricate, especially since many SME actors, particularly those with limited financial resources, exhibit lower technological literacy (Sundah et al., 2021). Notably, certain sectors, such as construction and agriculture, may find digitalization less suitable. The evolution of digital technology has positioned digital platforms as integral instruments for business operations. Consequently, SME actors must integrate digital technology to enhance competitiveness and foster entrepreneurial resilience (Putra et al., 2022). The capacity of business actors to explore novel strategies, promotional methods, and distribution

channels is imperative for sustained success, especially in challenging environmental conditions. The human capacity to transcend adversity and strive for success is exemplified by the concept of resilience, enabling entrepreneurs to defeat feelings of inadequacy, overcome bankruptcy, and achieve prosperity (Mariyati & Chomsyatun, 2020).

SME entrepreneurs play a significant role in the local economy, as underscored by Sofyan (2021). This significance became particularly pronounced for larger-scale SME entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by substantial impacts and widespread layoffs. SMEs not only contributed to economic momentum but served as a crucial mechanism for labour absorption. As Sánchez (2011) articulated, an entrepreneur is an individual adept at recognizing, evaluating, developing, and leveraging opportunities, resources, and conditions to enhance economic prosperity. Entrepreneurial prowess is characterized by a continuous commitment to innovation, enabling adaptation to evolving situations and conditions.

1.2.2.3 Decline of Trust in Online Networking for Business Purposes

One other challenge associated with digital networking is the absence of trust in online platforms. Many Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) face issues with fake accounts, misinformation, spam, and fraudulently claimed business connections which makes establish secure business relationships almost impossible (Ogbe & Orodriyo, 2018). The absence of trust inhibits SMEs to engage in value creating digital networking (Mustafa et al., 2021).

1.2.2.4 Business Recovery and Networking Resilience after the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for SMEs to network, as businesses were required to switch to online interactions (Rokom 2022). Nonetheless, such transitions were difficult for a majority of SMEs due to the absence of adequate digital infrastructure, skills, and financial resilience to sustain the new networking domain (Mariyati & Chomsyatun, 2020). Furthermore, although the pandemic led to an increase in adoption to digitally based networking, most SMEs are still having difficulties incorporating effective long-term business networking strategies that guarantee business stability.

Manzano-García and Ayala Calvo (2013) elucidated what it means to possess an entrepreneurial spirit: it involves the ability to identify opportunities, interpret market dynamics, utilize opportunities for economic gain, navigate stress amid market uncertainties, and surmount diverse obstacles. This rationale underscores the pertinence of the present research focus on entrepreneurial networking framework. The evolving trends, continuous changes, and business enhancements underscore the enduring relevance of business networking, serving as a value-added component for businesses, even in the post-pandemic era.

1.2.2.5 Little Participation in International and Regional Business Networks

Globalization has led to the opening up of many new networking windows, yet, a significant number of Malaysian SMEs remain cut off from international and regional business networks (Hussain et al., 2024). Some of the factors SMEs are exposed to which limit their ability to form cross-border associations include regulatory constraints, trade barriers, and low visibility of international networking opportunities (Putra et al. 2022).

This greatly disables SMEs from expanding their businesses internationally, which greatly stunts their growth.

Engaging in entrepreneurial activities involve inherent risks, necessitating entrepreneurs to exhibit resilience in the face of potential challenges jeopardizing their business interests (Pratama & Mardiawan, 2022). One prominent concern for entrepreneurs is the probability of business failure resulting from bankruptcy (Corner et al., 2017). Additional external environmental influences, including government policies, shifts in the demand of social market and natural disasters, pose considerable potential threats to entrepreneurial ventures (Renko et al., 2021).

Further business challenges compound these risks, such as difficulty in procuring raw materials, barriers in loan applications and inadequate market survey assessment. The competency of entrepreneurs to navigate and adapt to such adversities is commonly referred to as entrepreneurial resilience as proclaimed by Ayala & Manzano (2014) and constitutes a crucial skill set for entrepreneurs to effectively master the challenging circumstances (Ayala & Manzano, 2014; Manzano-García & Ayala-Calvo, 2020) regardless of economic difficulties. Resilient entrepreneurs exhibit the ability to swiftly devise solutions, enabling them to effectively address obstacles and uncertainties. This would empower them to adapt swiftly, capitalizing on opportunities and venturing into new business domains, even amid unfavourable circumstances.

1.2.3 Conclusion

The current literature on SME networking suffers from considerable gaps that limit the effective embedding of entrepreneurial networking into business processes. These gaps can be categorized into internal and external environmental barriers. Internally, SMEs

do not have an entrepreneurial networking model like McKinsey's 7S framework that could provide order to the networking strategies. Furthermore, SME entrepreneur's weak networking and poor digital skills constrains their ability to form business relationships. Organizational resistance to digital networking, combined with limited funding, makes strategic networking resources difficult to obtain, which means that SMEs are unable to take advantage of many opportunities.

Externally, the imbalance of digital technology and the lack of networking infrastructure remains a major barrier, especially to SMEs located in neglected regions where there is little access to networking services. Trust problems in business networks also reduce the usefulness of networking, as SMEs are burdened with being uninformed, unreliable partnerships, and online security risks. The effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic has worsened these problems, as many SMEs are struggling to adjust to new networking forms and restore business relationships.

Moreover, limits on the use of international and regional networking platforms makes it difficult for SMEs to grow past local markets, which hinders their ability to function in the international business arena.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by designing an integrated digital networking strategy for Malaysian SMEs. The study proposes to apply McKinsey's 7S Framework to systematically enhance foster networking capabilities, digital usage, and access to regional and international business networks. The goal of this study is to equip Malaysian SMEs with the capabilities to construct sustainable and competitive business networks in a borderless digital economy.

1.3 Research Gap

The concept of entrepreneurial networking focused on SMEs in Malaysia remains undeveloped and unstructured despite the significance of SMEs to Malaysian economy. The purposeful interconnections between SMEs are recognized as very essential for business growth, innovation, and continuity (Hussain et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2023). Even so, there are gaps that need attention especially in terms of the practicality of organized theories like McKinsey's 7S Framework and its associated networking components in SMEs.

1.3.1 Lack of Integrative and Structural Framework for Entrepreneurial Networking for SMEs

Perhaps the most significant gap is the absence of a purposeful and deliberate networking strategy among Malaysian SMEs. While studies point out to the importance of networking for the performance enhancement of SMEs (Mustafa et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2023), tackling the problem from the angle of fundamental organizational elements: strategy, structure, systems, skills, shared values, staff, and leadership personalized style is rarely attempted. The McKinsey 7S entrepreneurial networking framework could provide robust models for entrepreneurial networking, but it has not been adequately utilized in SME research.

1.3.2 Limited Knowledge Concerning the Contribution of Digital Networking to the Development Policies of SMEs

The role of social media and other elements of digitization in business growth is now appreciated, especially after the COVID-19 period (Putra et al., 2022; Sundah et al., 2021). However, most of the research conducted regarding SME networking still focuses on the use of conventional business face-to-face networking as opposed to digitized

networking that would enable SME region and globe wide expansion. This gap in literature prompts the examination of how SMEs are able to utilize digital networking devices for the purpose of establishing business relationships while being protected from information and cyber security risks as well as unproductive participation (Rahman et al., 2023).

1.3.3 The Examination of SME Networking Problems in Malaysia is Insufficient

There is a wealth of literature on the networking problems of SMEs in advanced countries (Ogbe & Orodriyo, 2018; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), but studies that focus on Malaysian SMEs are rather limited. A large number of SMEs in Malaysia are digitally illiterate, lack sufficient internet connectivity, and do not have adequate mentoring or training opportunities to help them take advantage of digital networking (Suryawati et al., 2023). In addition, unemployed differences in networking skills serve as barriers to market opportunities, which is harmful to the development of SMEs, especially those situated in remote and poor areas.

1.3.4 The Gaps in Business Networking Engagement Trust and Quality

The relationships developed while networking are as important as the networking itself, for value is created from social interactions. A majority of Malaysian SMEs appear to have difficulties in differentiating between positive value business relationships and mere social contacts on social networking platforms. For some social networks, the presence of spam bots, fake profiles, and untrustworthy business partners reduces the level of trust that SMEs have about business interactions and relationships. There is a gap in the literature on the application of the trust-building mechanisms in existing entrepreneurial networking models.

1.3.5 The Resilience of SME Networking During The COVID-19 Period

The pandemic provided insight into the transformations of social networking sites just like it did with social network sites (Rokom, 2022). More rigorous control of movement forced a number of SMEs to adopt online networking strategies, but there is still a limitation in research for the governed networking structures and the creation of sustained long-term resilience for SMEs (Mariyati & Chomsyatun, 2020). Some businesses flourished while far more suffered considerable monetary losses because of their unwillingness to engage in digital networking. There appears to be little focus on how SMEs can mitigate the adverse consequences of economic shocks and disruption of business activity by changing the networking strategy in the existing literature.

1.3.6 Conceptual Gaps in Business Networking by SMEs Using the McKinsey 7S Framework

The McKinsey 7S Framework has been helpful in corporate strategy and organizational development but is still lingering at McKinsey entrepreneurial networking (Renko et al, 2021). This study tries to solve this gap by strategically optimizing networking in SMEs through the application of the McKinsey 7S model on a multi-dimensional organizational level. In this manner the study offers a systematic and rational answer to the networking issue of SMEs, which is intricately and multifariously complex to be answered with the fragmented solutions set by other studies.

1.3.7 Closing The Gap in Research

There is scant literature that explains computer mediated communication as a network entrepreneurship activity, especially concerning the Malaysian context which still require more qualitative research about SME networking. Also, there is a limited number of studies on the networking processes that involve SME trust, resiliency after Covid 19,

and the application of strategic models like the McKinsey 7S Framework. This study aims to fill these gaps by proposing a networking model that will enable Malaysian SMEs to build strong and sustainable innovation-based, internationally competitive business networks.

The burning issue in contemporary entrepreneurship lies in the inefficiencies and inadequacies within entrepreneurial networking strategies, remain a priority's concern for Malaysian SMEs. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of business networking for entrepreneurial success, there are significant research gaps in understanding how to effectively model and optimize entrepreneurial networking, especially using established frameworks such as McKinsey's 7S Framework as a strategic tool to address these issues. In the current context, many studies in this field have relied heavily on outdated theoretical reviews, lacking qualitative insights from the in-depth understanding of an entrepreneur's perspective and a comprehensive review with a robust analytical model to substantiate and validate findings. This limitation holds back any deeper understanding of the practical impact of networking strategies. This gap emphasizes the need for a more thorough exploration of entrepreneurial networking's significance, particularly in utilizing frameworks like McKinsey's 7S to create models and improve networking dynamics. The time for a change is now, as businesses adopt a strong model to ensure their survival.

Additionally, this study aims to address these gaps by applying McKinsey's 7S Framework rigorously to model entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs. By analysing primary data from a diverse range of Malaysian SMEs, the present study seeks to offer actionable insights into leveraging strategic alignment across the 7S dimensions (Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Skills, Style, and Staff) to enhance networking effectiveness. The ultimate to formulate evidence-based recommendations

that enable Malaysian SMEs to establish robust and sustainable entrepreneurial networks, thereby fostering growth, innovation, and competitiveness on the global business stage.

Unlocking the potential of social networking for business growth in Malaysia requires a multifaceted strategy to bridge the business network divide, enhance human connection quality, and such diversify networking approaches provide strong support and guidance to promote inclusivity. Through these strategic implementations, Malaysian can create an ecosystem enabling SMEs to leverage social networking for innovation, market expansion, and sustainable growth in the global economy.

Lastly, addressing these research gaps entail a comprehensive study integrating with network diversity, and resources sharing. This investigation offers an insightful of understanding with obstacles encountered by Malaysian SMEs in capitalizing social networking, including viewpoint for policymakers, industry professionals, and academics seeking to improve the entrepreneurial networking model in Malaysia's SME sector, ultimately enhancing SME growth and competitiveness.

1.4 Research Objectives

The growing recognition of the structure of business networking is due to the rise in globalization and other economic activities. Business networking awareness should be nurtured at an early stage since it enhances knowledge development which fosters the creation of a new conceptual model. This analysis focuses on the role of networking education and its impact on entrepreneurial success. In order to understand the reasons why the new model is effective, this will test the business networking model within McKinsey's 7S framework focusing on Malaysian SMEs. The role of social networks

regarding entrepreneurial intentions has not been a new phenomenon (Shane et al., 2002) and yet there is still a gap in the literature that focuses on these social networks as channels for entrepreneurial venture information (Virginia et al., 2014). The study of entrepreneurship in the context of networking is important for the advancement of management science and business as a whole. The 7 S framework divides the components of an organization into “soft” and “hard” parts (Jurevicius, Management Insight, 2013). The soft parts include shared values, style, staff, and skills while the hard elements are strategy, structure, and systems which are easier to define and control. Contrarily, the softer elements can also provide a lasting competitive edge to the firm.

7S Elements	
Hard S	Soft S
Strategy	Style
Structure	Staff
System	Skills
	Shared Values

Exhibit 1.3: 7S Elements: Hard S & Soft S by Jurevicius.

The qualitative method of research is applicable in this case since it enables the researcher to qualitatively explore social and behavioral issues (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Given that networking among SMEs is often facilitated by intricate relationships and context, an exploratory research design enables the revealing of fluid and unstructured evolving patterns (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

The 'what' questions strive to determine the principal aspects of SME networking which is important in an exploratory study (Flick, 2022). Besides, 'why' questions provide answers in regard to reasons and obstacles to the adoption of networking (Patton, 2015). Finally, 'how' questions help to understand the processes and strategic actions SMEs need to take in order to improve their networking activities (Yin, 2018).

This study adopts the standards of qualitative research that focus on the use of detailed descriptions, context, and the degree of exploration to answer the issue of SME networking problems in Malaysia (Silverman, 2020; Saunders et al. 2019).

The purpose of this study is to establish an entrepreneurial networking model via the McKinsey 7S Framework in the case of SMEs in Malaysia and intends to achieve the following objectives that align with these 7S elements:

1. To explore the current status and practices of entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs.
2. To investigate the importance of entrepreneurial networking for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs.
3. To examine how the elements of the McKinsey 7S Framework are applied in entrepreneurial networking and to identify the most critical elements influencing SME performance.

1.5 Research Questions

The 7S elements are substantiated factors and have served as the core of the present study, helping the researcher to explore success criteria. Three research questions are outlined, as follows:

1. What is the current status of entrepreneurial networking among SMEs in Malaysia?
2. Why is entrepreneurial networking important for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs?
3. How are the elements of McKinsey's 7S Framework applied in entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs, and which elements are the most significant for fostering performance and innovation?

The following flow chart was developed by the researcher to illustrate the relationship between the research objectives and questions:

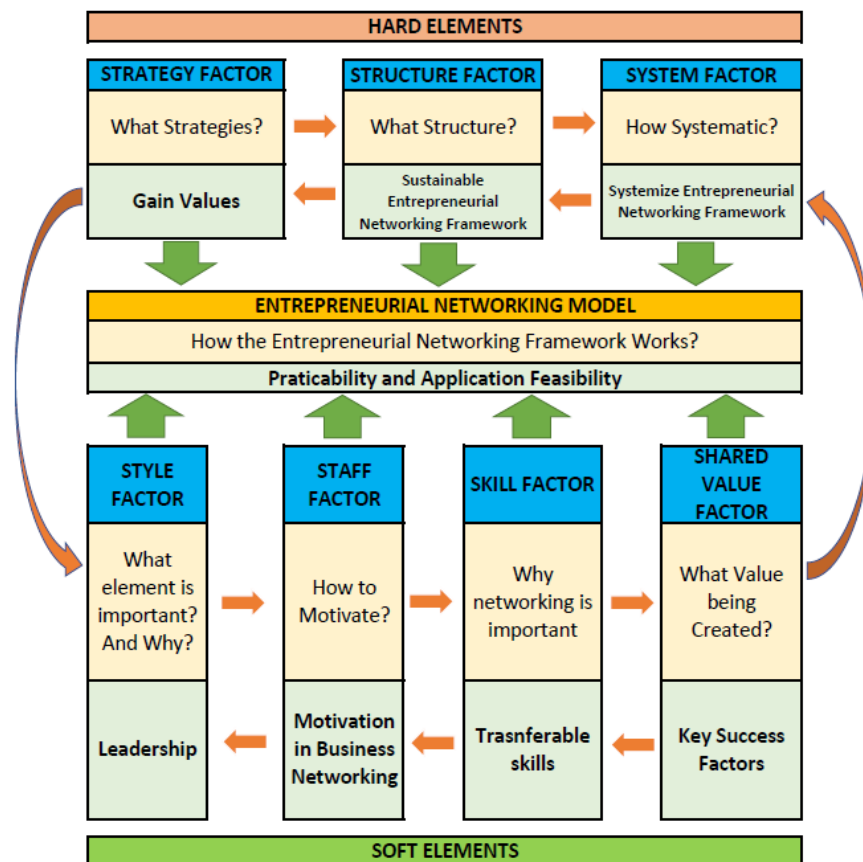


Exhibit 1.4: Conceptual Design of Entrepreneurial Networking Model

1.6 Research Scope

This research looks into business networking practices of Malaysian SMEs using an interactive face-to-face interview method within a case study design. The analytic framework is based on Social Network Theory that undergirds relations, social interactions, and network systems as key to the achievement of business success. In order to capture a range of networking experiences and approaches, 15 respondents were selected as case studies comprising of an expert in business networking, an esteemed entrepreneur, and a business owner. The selection criteria focuses on individuals who are already well versed in entrepreneurial networking so that the information obtained can be associated to the issues and possibilities in SME networking environments.

The sample of 15 is purposefully selected to provide sufficient detail and information while still maintaining a manageable number for qualitative research. Because of the exploratory reason of the study, such small sample provides richness of information needed for contextual analysis and deep understanding (Creswell and Poth, 2018). As guided by qualitative methodologies where the focus is on rich narratives rather than statistical association (Patton, 2015). Having a larger sample would enhance external validity, however at this stage the focus is on exposing the various experiences and networking elements that are unlikely to be captured by standardised surveys or quantitative approaches.

In the interest of achieving flexibility and adaptability, the interviews were not constrained by specific or rigid question formats, enabling respondents to respond freely based on their personal networking experiences. This allowed some leeway for emerging themes that would have otherwise gone undetected in the closed system of a fixed questionnaire. Nonetheless, this freedom made it difficult to maintain reliability

for cross-case comparisons due to different business backgrounds and perspectives impacting the level of exploration across these interviews. Even so, there was an attempt to develop some sort of structure which would permit discussion without deviating too much from the aims of the study.

It should be noted that this case study approach has some inherent weaknesses. Although these results shed some light on entrepreneurial networking in SMEs, they should not be applied indiscriminately across all sectors. Rather, this study presents an in-depth analysis of networking behaviors, outcomes and counseling by accomplished business practitioners. The findings are best suited to those clusters of populations who hold similar traits to those captured in the sample, particularly SME proprietors who are active business networkers. The researcher remains open to any form of further corroborating evidence to enhance the credibility and generalizability of the study's results.

Considering the time and resource capacities, the study prioritizes site expert perspectives over an industry analysis, which is a preliminary step to understand the networking behavior of SMEs. Further studies might strengthen the longitudinal scope of the research, broaden the sample's size, and utilize multi-method designs to improve the robustness of the findings and their comparative value.

1.7 Significance of The Study

This study tackles research deficiencies in entrepreneurial networking from the viewpoint of knowledge, practice, and policy using McKinsey's 7S framework inside the context of Social Network Theory to assess the effectiveness of SME networking.

Within the perspective of knowledge, this research aids in bridging gaps in SME networking by developing a systematic evaluation framework. Business networks usually do not possess formal theoretical frameworks in management science (Cantù, 2015). The application of McKinsey's 7S Framework enhances the theoretical comprehension of the networking forms of SMEs and serves as a basis for later studies.

In practice, this study seeks to respond to the absence of formal business networking training at the level of SME management. Nowadays, as a consequence of digital transformation, business relations are changing towards being boundaryless (Misner, 2018). This study offers practical evidence on the effectiveness of networking strategies focused on horizontal-peer-to-peer networking, trade associations, and entrepreneurial ecosystems, enabling SMEs to formulate optimal network strategies for sustainability and growth.

On the policy side, the results emphasize the lack of institutional assistance and systematic networking schemes. Considering the low network availability for SMEs, there is a need for policy action to foster open networking opportunities like knowledge sharing, mentoring, and digital network services (Hussain et al., 2024). Furthermore, such programs can make SMEs more network competent and help build an inclusive, internationally competitive SME environment.

This study serves as a base for further research and policy measures aimed at enhancing the SME business networking capabilities by merging knowledge, practice and policy.

1.8 Organization of The Thesis

This thesis is made up of five chapters that are tailored to address the topic of entrepreneurial networking among SMEs in Malaysia in a step-by-step manner.

In the Chapter 1, Introduction, the researcher constructs the context of the study which includes defining the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research scope, and significance. This chapter provides the outline of the thesis with a rationale of how the research is conducted.

In Chapter 2, Literature Review, the researcher focuses on the development of SMEs in Malaysia within the context of their economic contribution, entrepreneurial activity, and other primary drivers of success. It also analyzes the impact of entrepreneurship education and government assistance. One of the prime focuses is on business networking which is implemented with the help of McKinsey's 7S Framework that analyzes the degree and importance of networking to the sustainability of SMEs. The chapter is capped with a paradigm or theory that the researcher invented.

In Chapter 3, Research Methodology, this chapter outlines the research approach, sampling strategy, methods of data collection, and the form of analysis that was conducted. The research uses a qualitative case study approach consisting of fifteen case studies of SMEs whose networks are used as a resource and whose networking strategies and challenges are explored. Some other issues have to do with their network priorities are also discussed.

In Chapter 4, Research Analysis and Results, the researcher analyses networking processes, company strategy processes, and business problems are informed through the case studies and interviews, which gathered data from different sources. A comparative analysis of emerging themes is provided.

Lastly in Chapter 5, The Discussion and Conclusion, this section looks at the results and discusses the context for the application of Social Network Theory and the McKinsey 7S Framework alongside the findings. It also offers suggestions for further work, focusing on the development of networking approaches in SMEs.

Some of the important Operational Definitions including:

1. Entrepreneurial Networking: The creation of relationships directed at achieving business objectives for greater economic gain and competition.
2. McKinsey's 7S Framework: A model for strategy execution and organizational diagnosis focusing on seven basic building blocks of an organization.
3. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Companies defined according to the number of employees and revenue (SME Corporation Malaysia).
4. Social Network Theory: A conceptual framework that considers the social systems in which entrepreneurial activities are embedded.
5. Case Study Approach: Principal qualitative method designed to study the real-world phenomenon in its context.

This comprehensive structured thesis addresses the issue of business networking in its relation to the growth, strategy, and sustainability of SMEs.

1.9 Conclusions

This is to conclude that Chapter 1 contains the research background, problem statement, objectives, questions, scope, and significance which lays the foundation for the study. The chapter elaborates the need to appreciate entrepreneurial networking within the context of SMEs in Malaysia by accentuating its significance toward business growth, competitive advantage, and sustainability. Social Network Theory and McKinsey's 7S Framework serve as the study's sociological and strategic constituents that seek to explain how SMEs form and use business networks.

This research is important because it fills an academic and practical policy gap with respect to the nurturing and sustaining ecosystem of entrepreneurial networking which lacks a properly defined structural strategy on SME networking. The chapter also draws attention to the importance of qualitative approaches like case study and interview in collecting data that richly describes the context of SME networking behavior, challenges, and success factors. In addition, Chapter 1 elaborates how SMEs can develop their networking abilities to improve market access, financial sustainability, and long-term business resilience, which emphasizes the strategic contribution of the study. The fluid nature of business networking that has evolved in the contemporary era requires valuable input from SMEs, policymakers, and business support organizations which is why this study endeavors to address their needs.

At this stage of the thesis, Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review with a detailed critique of studies and theoretical frameworks on SME networking. The approach taken is methodical and ensures that the study is underpinned by real and theoretical evidence before the research methods, results, and discussions in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship integrates multidisciplinary study involving a myriad of competing and complementary theories related to the initiation, administration, and growth of a business enterprise. This chapter examines the perspectives in order to explain the phenomena of entrepreneurial undertakings while focusing on the formative influences of networking on business strategy formulation. Analyzing McKinsey's 7S Framework provides this analysis with a pronounced model from the domain of organizational behavior, which is used to diagnose organizational efficiency and strategy implementation (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

McKinsey's 7S Framework is known for its unique approach in which the existence of an organization is analyzed as a whole system made up of seven interdependent building blocks: Strategy, Structure, Systems, Skills, Style, Staff, and Shared Values. This integrative approach helps explain performance and responsiveness toward goal achievement in multifaceted ways. The model's strength comes from its emphasis upon cross-cutting structural integration, its relative universality in diverse business settings, and its multi-dimensional character in assessing organizational management (Kaplan, 2005). McKinsey's 7S model, when applied to entrepreneurial networking, provides a way of analyzing networking strategies with the intention of improving business

engagements by setting strategic objectives, creating an enabling environment for business, and empowering competent personnel to take charge of networking activities (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

In addition, the McKinsey 7S model may be useful for developing networking plans that support broader business goals. By establishing clear structures and systems within a culture that encourages relationship-building, entrepreneurs are able to facilitate business growth, innovation, and long-term value creation. As business environments continue to change, this integration is vital for achieving permanent results and being competitive (Granovetter, 1985).

This study examines entrepreneurial networking of SMEs in Malaysia is analyzed regarding the business networking opportunities and challenges. SMEs in Malaysia have contributed significantly to economic development, employment, innovation, and GDP growth. At the same time, they experience ongoing challenges such as inadequate funding, high competition, slow digital shift, and poor networking (SME Corp Malaysia, 2022). There is a need to enhance networking strategies to help sustain and grow SMEs. Resourceful business networks contribute to the success of firms by providing critical resources, useful information, and access to new markets. Strong networking allows for business expansion, new partnerships, and competitive positioning, which highlights the importance of networking in entrepreneurial activities (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

In order to strengthen and enhance networking strategies, this research analyzes existing entrepreneurial networking models and frameworks with particular attention to mechanisms of acceptance and retention in business networks. The study was developed within McKinsey's 7S Framework, in which networking integration is assessed

in terms of Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Skills, Style, and Staff. With the use of the McKinsey model, this research aims to diagnose the networking strategies of SMEs and suggests changes that would allow these businesses to achieve growth and sustainability over time.

This study is grounded on Social Network Theory that underlines the role of relationships, interactions, and networks as important resources towards the realization of entrepreneurial goals. This theory helps explain how small and medium-sized enterprises form, maintain, and utilize business networks within and across various operational contexts. The integration of principles from entrepreneurial networking, McKinsey's 7S Framework, and Social Network Theory makes it possible to come up with an exhaustive model that determines the effectiveness of SME networking.

In summary, this chapter sets the objectives, justification, and theoretical scope of the study while further consolidating the importance of networking in the development of SMEs. It describes the research model and outlines the guiding frameworks as well as the theories which the study is based on. The following chapters will include a comprehensive literature review, explanation of the research methodology and results, and finally, actionable suggestions to improve SME networking in Malaysia.

2.2 The Role of SMEs in Malaysia's Economic Development

In 2022 the Malaysian government made a significant policy change, in its policies by including startup businesses in the broader SMEs category. This shift was formalized by renaming the sector as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) aligning with Malaysia's Phase 4 National Recovery Plan (NRP). To ensure clarity the researcher separates data into two groups; pre 2022 data collected by the Department of Statistics

Malaysia (DSM, 2022) labelled as SME data and post 2022 data referred to as MSMEs data.

It's important to note that this distinction doesn't significantly impact the research focus or direction. The limitation stems from criteria related to turnover among target respondents specifically identifying businesses with turnover between RM20 million and RM50 million. This criterion excludes micro businesses in Malaysia that typically have turnovers below RM300,000.00 based on guidelines, from DSM and SME Corp standards².

Given these changes the research explores the landscape after 2022. The gradual easing of travel restrictions, between states starting in October 2021 and the reopening of borders by April 2022 were crucial in supporting a recovery. This setting enabled business owners to build up momentum contributing to the revival of Malaysia's economy.

In the report published in 2021, despite these developments Malaysia's economic performance in 2021 fell short of the pre pandemic levels seen in 2019. This discrepancy had impacts on the role of MSMEs in key economic indicators like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) exports and employment all of which continued to decline throughout 2021. Specifically, Malaysia's MSMEs saw a GDP growth rate of 1.0% in 2021 marking an

² Original source from: <https://www.smecorp.gov.my/index.php/en/policies/2020-02-11-08-01-24/sme-definition>. Accessed in December 2023.

improvement from the negative 7.3% contraction experienced in 2020. It is important to note that while this growth was positive it lagged Malaysia's GDP growth.

According to DSM, MSME report (2021), this pattern has persisted since 2020 as evidenced by the time series data illustrated in Exhibit 2.1, comparing Malaysia's GDP with that of MSMEs. This analysis highlights the difficulties and intricacies within the MSME sector calling for an examination of the factors influencing its performance, in the post 2022 economic landscape. Comparison of Malaysia's MSMEs GDP and Non MSME GDP, along with the GDP growth are illustrated in Exhibit 2.1 sourced from the Department of Statistics Malaysia's MSMEs Performance report for 2021.

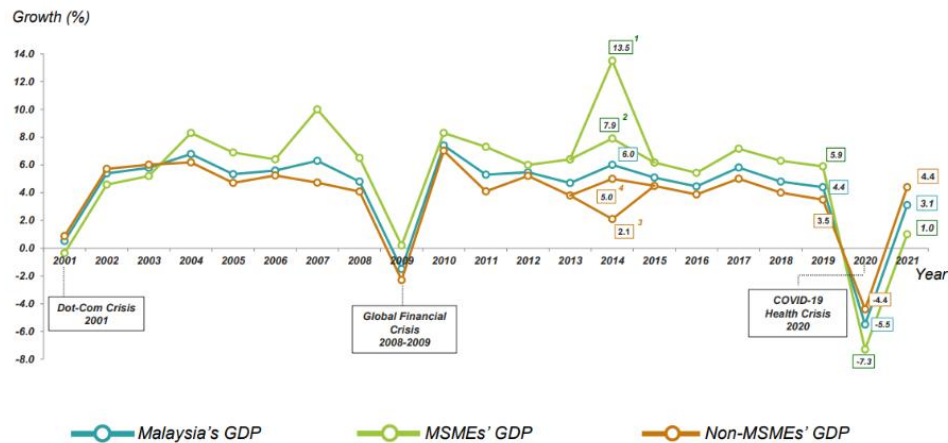


Exhibit 2.1: Comparison of Malaysia GDP, MSMEs' GDP and Non-MSME GDP and Overall GDP Growth (%), Source: Department of Statistic Malaysia MSMEs Performance in 2021.

Amidst challenges the Malaysian economy showed a gradual recovery from 2020 to 2021 as highlighted in the Malaysia SME Corp Annual Report released in 2021³. Despite

³ Original Source: <https://www.dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/small-and-medium-enterprises-smes-performance-2020>. Accessed in December 2021

facing difficulties, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) played a role in this recovery by contributing to the countrys economic landscape. In the period of 2019 20 SMEs made up 38.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) employed half of the workforce at 48.4% and accounted for a substantial portion—17.9%—of total exports. These remarkable contributions were made despite facing an climate.

Analyzing data from 2019 reveals that domestic demand was a driver of growth in Malaysia with SMEs playing an essential role in this aspect. The growth rate of SME GDP for that year was noteworthy at 5.8% despite challenges stemming from global consumption reductions and local supply chain disruptions. In that year SME Corp Malaysia⁴ updated its criteria for categorizing companies within the manufacturing sector as SMEs based on a turnover not exceeding RM50 million and employing no more, than 200 workers.

According to the same report published by DSM (2021), the service industries businesses were considered medium sized enterprises (SMEs) if their annual revenue was, below RM20 million and they employed no more than 75 staff members. It is commonly understood that in Malaysia companies with a revenue exceeding RM100 million are categorized as corporations while those below this threshold are typically referred to as SMEs.

Taking a look at the data Exhibit 2.2 reveals a finding; SMEs have consistently outperformed both the overall GDP and Non-SME GDP in growth over the last twenty

⁴ Original Source from: <https://www.smecorp.gov.my/index.php/en/policies/2020-02-11-08-01-24/sme-definition>, Accessed in January 2022.

years. This trend highlights the agility and adaptability of SMEs due to their size, private ownership and simpler organizational structures. These qualities have proven beneficial during times enabling SMEs to navigate obstacles with resilience and responsiveness compared to larger businesses. The data showcases this resilience. Emphasizes the role of SMEs as active contributors, to Malaysia's economy.

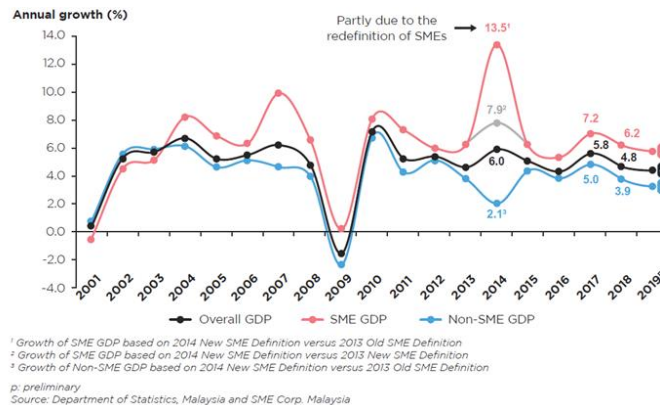


Exhibit 2.2: SME GDP, Non-SME GDP and Overall GDP Growth in the past 20 years(%)

In the year 2022 alone, Malaysian MSMEs demonstrated an exceptionally favourable economic performance, registering a substantial 11.6% growth in their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as depicted in Exhibits 2.3 and 2.4. This marked acceleration in growth signals a robust and dynamic underpinning of business fundamentals within the Malaysian SME landscape, particularly noteworthy when compared to the relatively modest 1.3% growth recorded in the preceding year, 2021.

The MSME sector emerged as a significant contributor, making a noteworthy imprint on the overall Malaysian GDP by claiming a 38.4% share, equivalent to a substantial RM 580.4 billion. This contribution underscores the resilience, adaptability, and economic significance of MSMEs in the Malaysian context. While MSMEs play a pivotal role in

driving economic growth, it is also essential to acknowledge the complementary role played by larger corporations and listed companies, which contribute to the overall economy's GDP. This collaboration reinforces a diversified economic landscape, with larger entities serving as the growth engines alongside the dynamic and agile MSME sector.

As reported, the marked increase in MSME GDP in 2022 not only indicates a rapid recovery but also positions MSMEs as crucial players in shaping Malaysia's economic trajectory. This data serves as an indication to MSME resilience, and to their ability to not only weather economic challenges but contribute significantly to the abundance of national economy. The specific details provided in Exhibits 2.3 and 2.4 offer at a glance of granular understanding of the growth, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the MSME sector's impact on Malaysia's economic landscape in the specified timeframe.

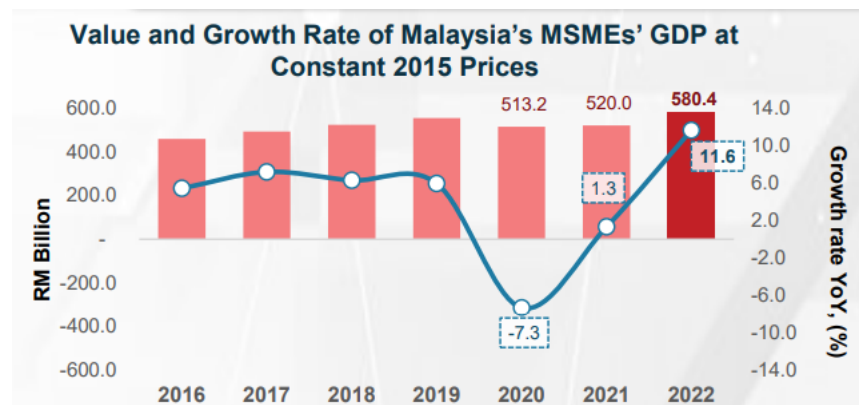


Exhibit 2.3: Value and Growth Rate of Malaysia's MSMEs' GDP at Constant 2015 Prices, Source from: Department of Statistic Malaysia 2022 MSMEs Performance 2022.

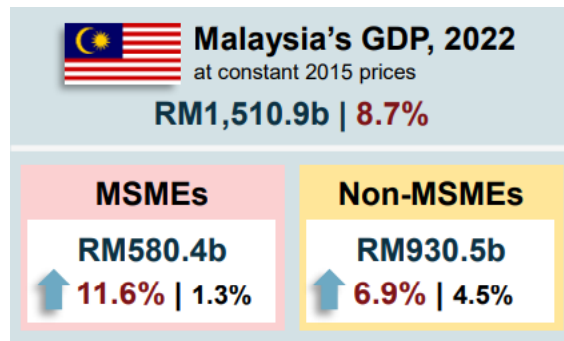


Exhibit 2.4: MSEM Vs non-MSMEs Growth in %, Source from: Department of Statistic Malaysia 2022 MSMEs Performance 2022.

As published in the report, before the hit of COVID, Malaysian SMEs showed a consistent economic performance trend. The SME GDP remained stable following a path since 2015. By 2019 the recorded SME GDP stood at RM552.3 billion contributing, to Malaysia’s economy, which had a value of RM1,421.5 billion.

As Illustrated in Exhibit 2.5 is that the performance that highlights the essential and lasting role that SMEs play in Malaysia’s national economy. This data reflects how resilient and dependable SMEs have been in their contributions. Despite fluctuations and challenges during this period SMEs have proven their ability to maintain a steady economic position showcasing their reliability as a cornerstone of Malaysian economy.

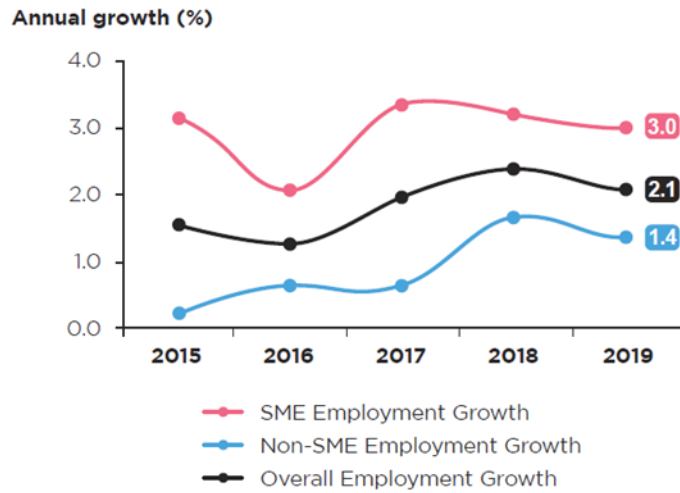
SMEs do contribute significantly to the economic output but also serve as drivers of economic stability demonstrating their enduring importance and impact on the country’s financial landscape. A detailed examination of Exhibit 2.5 offers insights into how SMEs have influenced and shaped Malaysian economic performance in the years leading up, to the pandemic.



Exhibit 2.5: Value of SME GDP and Overall GDP (Constant 2015 Prices)

The same report published that in 2019 SMEs in Malaysia provided jobs for around 7.3 million people showing an increase, from the 7.1 million in 2018. This small rise of 3% highlights the importance of SMEs in creating employment opportunities in Malaysian job market. Additionally, as illustrated in Exhibit 2.6 SMEs play an active role in driving job growth across multiple sectors.

As published by the DSM (2021), as illustrated in the data as shown in Exhibit 2.6 also reveals that job growth in SMEs not only surpassed sectors but also exceeded the overall job growth rate. Specifically, SMEs saw a growth rate of 3% compared to the rates of 2.1% and 1.4% seen in non-SME sectors. This demonstrates the strength and flexibility of SMEs in shaping employment trends. SMEs are essential, for promoting progress and social stability by leading in job creation showcasing their ability to adapt to changing economic circumstances and provide valuable employment opportunities that benefit Malaysian economy at a larger spectrum.



p: preliminary
 Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia

Exhibit 2.6: SME Employment, Non-SME Employment and Overall Employment Growth (%)

2.3 SMEs and Entrepreneurial Development in Malaysia: A Strategic Perspective

In Malaysia, SME entrepreneurs are still important as contributors of socioeconomic development. Many including Zainudin (2021) and Rahman et. al (2023) suggest that there is growing focus on building entrepreneurial networks which is now regarded as an essential part of the contemporary business environment. Empirical evidence shows that business owners are increasingly utilizing networks in order to improve organization performance. This seemingly simple strategy is the pursuit of new solutions and is a reflection of the changing nature of business which now centres on collaboration and interconnectedness as a means for innovation and sustainability.

The intent of the researcher in this segment is to analyse the relationship between SMEs and entrepreneurship in the context of contemporary developments and regional comparisons. The narrative intends to analyse not only the emergence and relevance of entrepreneurship in SMEs, but also the changing role of SMEs in the world and their

particular evolution in the fast-changing environment of Malaysia. To achieve this, the study attempts to analyse the relationships between entrepreneurship and SMEs in a holistic manner and as a framework captures the context of school and practical business environment, and most importantly, to ensure such adoption can be made and feasible to do so.

As Zainuddin (2021) said, three independent variables, Supply Chain, Financing, and Social Networking, are claimed to have a positive influence on the better performance of Malaysian SMEs during COVID 19 pandemic. Zainuddin's findings frame the discussion of the transformation of supply chains for SME businesses. It suggests that there is a severe need to reconsider existing supply chain systems. Zainuddin's research emphasized the necessity for a balanced business cycle that includes everything from obtaining raw materials to marketing the finished products.

Moreover, Zainuddin (2021) investigated the role of social networks in assisting SMEs during the pandemic. Social media engagement had a remarkable effect on SMEs that were struggling with the effects of the pandemic, particularly during lockdowns when normal methods of communication became severely limited. Nowadays, social networking is evolving beyond its traditional scope and remains a primary source of critical customer information for Malaysian SMEs. Faced with limited physical interaction during lockdowns, the use of social media skyrocketed. Numerous social media platforms are now being used by potential customers to gather market intelligence prior to making buying decisions. The increase in online shopping, which was fueled by lockdowns, has placed greater emphasis on customers' reviews and feedback. Aside from being direct non-users and customers, people greatly participate in the buying decision making process by describing their experiences and opinions, thus contributing

to a virtually hyperactive marketplace where quality of goods and services is extensively debated.

Furthermore, the increased dependence on social networking sites has changed how business is operated. The focus on people's participation has redefined business processes and practices into a more fluidic system where data is dispersed and received instantaneously, and relationships are established with minimal efforts. Zainuddin (2021) argues that social networking savvy entrepreneurs are being regarded as the leaders in boosting their business activities during the epidemic. This is not only regarded as important during the pandemic, but even in the post-pandemic period, this is perceived as a dominant competitive edge. SME entrepreneurs have come to terms with it and are sharpening their social entrepreneurial abilities. Being able to use modern technology and maneuver through social networking is a must-have resource for SMEs in an ever-changing business world.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Networking

In the context of entrepreneurship, networking is an important aspect in the success of SMEs through teamwork, culturing resourceful approaches and creating alliances that enhance economic development (Cameron and Wilmot, 2019). While over 137,000 new businesses are started everyday (Mason, 2017), their survival becomes increasingly dependent on effective networking to address the issues associated with the business's sustainability (Sherf et al, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, for example, forced many SMEs into financial difficulties due to inadequate networking and lack of digital networking (Zainuddin, 2023). On a positive note, new developments in digitalization such as AI enabled networking applications and automated payment

systems (Tong and Gong, 2020) have empowered SMEs approach new markets and operate more effectively.

Strategic networking enhances SMEs' access to mentorship, funding, and market information, which aids in resolving ambiguities (Acs et al., 2017; Audretsch et al., 2018). Governments around the world understand the need to aid entrepreneurial ecosystems by providing funding and other resources to foster resilience among SMEs (Abdurakhmonov et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial networking stimulates collaboration between the public and private sectors, facilitating collective action to share experiences and resources in addressing economic challenges (Ratten, 2020b). Furthermore, social media and other forms of digital interaction have changed how business is conducted. This allows business owners to manage and respond to changing market conditions (Shaker, 2020; Haeffele et al., 2020). Recent research has shown the existence of a positive correlation between networking and business performance due to socialization, sharing of ideas, and creativity (Sendawula et al., 2023; Murad et al., 2024). In conclusion, entrepreneurial networking proves to be an effective strategy for MSEs coping with competition, promoting business growth, and taking advantage of new possibilities in an ever-changing environment.

2.4.1 Entrepreneurial Networking as part of Social Networking

Networking in social entrepreneurship is regarded as a more specialized form of social networking, having as its primary goal the creation of contacts that will facilitate access to resources, information, or other relevant opportunities (Li et al., 2024). Unlike social networking, which may include other forms of networking, entrepreneurial networking is purposeful and self-directed in nature. Singh and Basri (2024) discuss the role self-dependence and extraversion have regarding networking activities that influence

productivity, while Satar et al. (2024) argue that intense socialization within networks foster alertness to entrepreneurial initiatives and business ventures. Online forms of interaction are becoming more important, as they not only help mobilize resources but also sustain business activity (Li et al., 2024). The scope of networks, the strength of the relationships within the network, and the density of the network are the defining characteristics of entrepreneurial networks that determine the access to information and opportunities. The Entrepreneur's first point of contact is usually through personal networks (family and friends) before moving to organizational networks (professional associations) that provide more specific services. The existence of platforms such as LinkedIn or Twitter has revolutionized business networking by allowing people to form connections from many parts of the world, thus gaining a competitive edge in business (Satar et al., 2024). As noted above, the combination of in-person and online strategic networking is important for the success and sustainability of any entrepreneurial endeavor.

2.4.2 Critical Analysis: Challenges and Opportunities in Entrepreneurial Networking

Networking in entrepreneurship has its advantages, but it is also coupled with certain difficulties that require careful maneuvering by the entrepreneur themselves:

- **Information Overload:** An entrepreneur may experience inefficiencies when trying to maintain an overly broad or loosely defined network. To prevent information overload and a waste of resources, careful selective engagement is necessary (Singh & Basri, 2024).

- **Echo Chamber Effect:** Familiar networks may be over-relied upon, which leads to a lack of novel ideas. To stimulate innovation, an entrepreneur needs to be able to break out of their comfort zone and reach out to people outside of their immediate network (Li et al., 2024).
- **Digital Networking Risks:** While digital tools can improve connectivity to a great extent, they also introduce the risks of misinformation, security breaches, and superficial interactions. Entrepreneurs must assess their online relations to determine if they are strategically beneficial (Satar et al., 2024).

More discussion in the Malaysian context will be made in section 2.5 at later pages.

2.4.3 Implications for Entrepreneurial Practice

Satar, et al. (2024) recognizing the entrepreneurial networking process has specific implications for business managers:

- **Network Growth Strategy:** These entrepreneurs need to strike a fusion of strong and weak ties within valuable networks.
- **Use of Modern Technology:** Active participation in social networking sites purposefully improves visibility, reputation, and access to diverse markets.
- **Blending Personal Networks and Organizational Networks:** Both social and professional contacts should be nurtured simultaneously to provide emotional and professional assistance from the industry.

As a subtype of social networking, entrepreneurial networking has increasingly been gaining importance as an important aspect of business growth and development. Effective network management in entrepreneurs enables them to obtain resources, identify new opportunities, and ensure sustainable development. At the same time, network overload, risk of homogeneity, and digital networking dangers should be dealt with strategically. There is still much to learn about these issues that can help entrepreneurs help determine how best to integrate networking into business in today's fast changing environment.

2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Entrepreneurial Network in Malaysia

According to DSM (2022), SMEs make up 98.5% of businesses in Malaysia, playing a key role in the workforce and economic sustenance of the country. Growth suffers because of a lack of finances, technological barriers, and competition from MNCs. Stringent loan application processes with inadequate collateral make it almost impossible for many SMEs to acquire financing, leading to expansion challenges (Mohamad et al., 2021). These problems are worsened by poor cash flow management and poor long-term sustaining strategies.

The gap between SMEs has been increased due to the rapid digitalization caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. High costs and lack of technical capabilities plus heightened fear of cyber-attacks make the adoption of cloud computing, e-commerce, and digital payment services almost impossible for some SMEs (Hamim et al., 2023). Initiatives such as the Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ) are not useful as adoption still remains low for SMEs trying to expand their reach using digital networks.

The amplification of competition from larger firms is yet another challenge waiting for SMEs due to the increased market coverage these larger corporations enjoy because of their established business networks and market dominance (World Bank, 2023). Due to a lack of strong government incentive support, many SMEs find it challenging to switch from traditional to more progressive business models which makes penetration into the global markets impossible (Zainuddin, 2021). Unfortunately, without deliberate effort, SMEs will continue to stagnate.

Networking is important for the growth of SMEs as it offers mentorship, funding, and partnership assistance through trade associations and government sponsored agencies (Rahman et al., 2023). Unfortunately, Malaysian SMEs tend to neglect them because of a lack of knowledge, inadequate networking skills, and a passive attitude towards business collaboration (Asia Foundation, 2023). Mentorship, training workshops, and organized networking programs are crucial in building entrepreneurial networks for the resilience of SMEs.

To tackle these issues, Malaysia has adopted policies such as SME Masterplan 2020-2030, and NEP 2030 as well as, financial grants and interregional trades to improve financing and the infusion of technology as well as, market integration for SMEs (World Bank, 2023). These aim to develop an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem through PPP and active government participation (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023).

Even with these policies, SMEs are still faced with challenges financing, technological advances, and structural issues which hinder the building of strong entrepreneurial networks. Low financial costs improved digital access, more effective networking policies and actions are needed to meet these demands. Adequately servicing the

networks of SMEs is critical for the Malaysia economic growth and business sustainability. While networking entrepreneurship has most of the obstacles are cultural, economic, and infrastructural, which require constant effort to service the potential for growth within SMEs.

Challenges that hinder the growth and sustainability of SMEs in Malaysia's entrepreneurial networking are numerous. Poor business skills and knowledge of networking strategies are common among entrepreneurs thus hindering their effectiveness (Sagita et al., 2024). Financial illiteracy, insufficient mentoring resources, and inadequate strategic business outline all lead to a failure in meeting the required early stage business objectives (Rahman et al., 2017). Furthermore, many SMEs do not engage in networking, severely limiting their access to useful market information and business partnerships (Welsh et al., 2014; Asia Foundation, 2024).

Low level of innovation and existence of market entry barriers hampers the competitiveness of SMEs. A number of entrepreneurs have adopted the existing models as opposed to seeking to differentiate them due to poor networking techniques (Sagita et al., 2024). Ethnic diversity in Malaysia does present business opportunities but also poses a challenge in networking due to cultural differences and trust issues within business communities (Hassan et al., 2018). In addition, SMEs are often unable to take full advantage of networking opportunities due to limited funding, bureaucracy, and difficulty with technological change (Rasiah et al., 2024). Women entrepreneurs suffer from these issues as well, but in addition face time restrictions that hinder their networking activities (Asia Foundation, 2024).

SME's in Malaysia are faced with issues, but the business economy still presents with numerous opportunities. The value of strong business networks goes beyond resource sharing as they become avenues for mentorship, financing, and even expansion (Sagita et al, 2024). Strategic networking improves overall business marketing and planning, which in turn assists SMEs in joining supply chains and joint ventures (Welsh et al, 2014). Exchanging information through social media and other digital forums is an inexpensive method for entrepreneurs to access new markets (Satar et al, 2024).

Furthermore, networking enables self-sufficient businesses by offering useful industry knowledge, crisis management frameworks, as well as opportunities for collaboration (Sagita et al, 2024). This underscores striking cultural diversity that can be harnessed from Malaysia to market to different consumer groups (Asia Foundation, 2024). The government also provides structured initiatives such as economic zone business incubators which can provide informal networking as well as training and education which increases users networking skills (Rasiah et al, 2024).

For SMEs to take advantage of the new opportunities, they need to take the initiative, embrace digital marketing, and expand cross-culturally. The government must improve communication of the available programs while simplifying red tape for easier participation in networking. In trying to build an entrepreneurial culture that connects businesses, Malaysia stands to gain greater SME competitiveness, innovative efforts, and sustained economic development.

2.6 The Importance of Entrepreneurial Networking

Networking and social capital significantly contribute towards the growth and modern prosperity of SMEs in Malaysia by enabling the provision of resources, improving

innovation, and enhancing performance. Strong participation in networking greatly improves business competitiveness because strong networks alone empirically enable the use of entrepreneurial traits such as innovation, risk-taking, and strategic planning to their fullest (Sagita et al., 2024). SMEs that take part in both strong and weak networking relations are seen to have greater financial, industry, and strategic aid, which helps in their sustainability in the market (Mohd Rifin et al., 2023).

Business networking also advances the social capital of the multicultural business environment in Malaysia by fostering inter-ethnic and inter-cultural business collaboration (Hassan et al., 2018). The referral-based type of business networking, like Business Network International (BNI), utilizes trust based long term networking and this type of referral networks prove the efficacy of such approaches. There is substantial evidence that shows entrepreneurs in a structured networking group build reputation, and enhance visibility through strategic partnerships, hence driving growth and sustainability of their businesses (Misner, 2020), see its core values in Exhibit 2.7.



Exhibit 2.7: BNI's Core Values and Chapters Location Globally

There is little empirical evidence to substantiate the qualitative and structural analysis of networks in the existing literature on entrepreneurship and networking. Culture, trust, and the adoption of technology still pose barriers to optimal networking effectiveness. The shift from face-to-face networking to digital networking presents opportunities for SMEs to participate in international business (Keller & Kotler, 2007). Nevertheless, more research is required to analyze the effects of digital networking on sustaining business relationships over long periods of time.

In the context of an interconnected, digital world, networking is no longer optional for SMEs but becomes a critical factor for success. The combination of systematic networking methods, government assistance, and policies from higher educational institutions changed the Malaysian entrepreneurial ecosystem. Future research should be directed towards developing networking systems that combine SME engagement through digital means and traditional methods so that they can remain agile and competitive in the fast-changing business environment. Connecting with other small-and-medium enterprises will lead to enhanced innovation, increased market reach, and development of the economy, which, in turn, strengthens the contribution of SMEs.

2.7 Critical Success Factors for SMEs in Networking

2.7.1 An Overview

For SMEs in Malaysia, entrepreneurial networking is an important business tool as it helps SMEs' owners improve their marketing efforts, obtain business contracts, and acquire important inputs. Because many SMEs do not have the financial resources for large-scale marketing, networking is an affordable way to enhance brand visibility and market presence (Sweeney et al., 2001; Amonini et al., 2010). The shift from informal business relations to networking as a business activity has been gradual, and modern

networking techniques include flexibility, relationship building, and reciprocation (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995).

Networking of any kind, formal or informal, is effective when facilitated by participation and the depth of the relationships. Formal networks have a more centralized control while informal networks, especially among smaller businesses, depend more on interpersonal relationships (Davern, 1997; Wilkins, 1997). The effectiveness of these networks is also dependent on their density and the trust within them, whereby high-density networks are more likely to foster collaboration and commitment (Granovetter, 1973; Moorman et al., 1993). Networking is greatly influenced by trust as it affects the member's readiness to engage in business partnerships and share information and resources (Silversides, 2001; Andresen et al., 2012).

Strategic networking increases trust and makes business collaboration easier through joint ventures, capital funding, and collision investments. While these alliances are strengthened by trust and commitment, they are still subject to complications in competitive market settings (Williams, 2005; Koza & Lewin, 1999). Having said that, good networking enables SMEs to forge partnerships over a long period, which helps with the organizations' business robustness and sustainability.

Networking serves as a strategy as it is an effective marketing tool, facilitating SMEs in product promotion, gaining visibility in the industry, and acquiring new clients. There is in fact evidence which shows that networking impacts marketing choices and is crucial for the growth of SMEs' businesses (Gilmore et al., 2006; Menelec & Jones, 2015). Exhibit 2.8 illustrates the influence of networks on small professional business services' marketing (from Menelec & Jones, 2015). SMEs which actively participate in networking

are able to obtain valuable resources, information, and relationships which help to positively increase competition and innovation (Sudibyo et al., 2023).

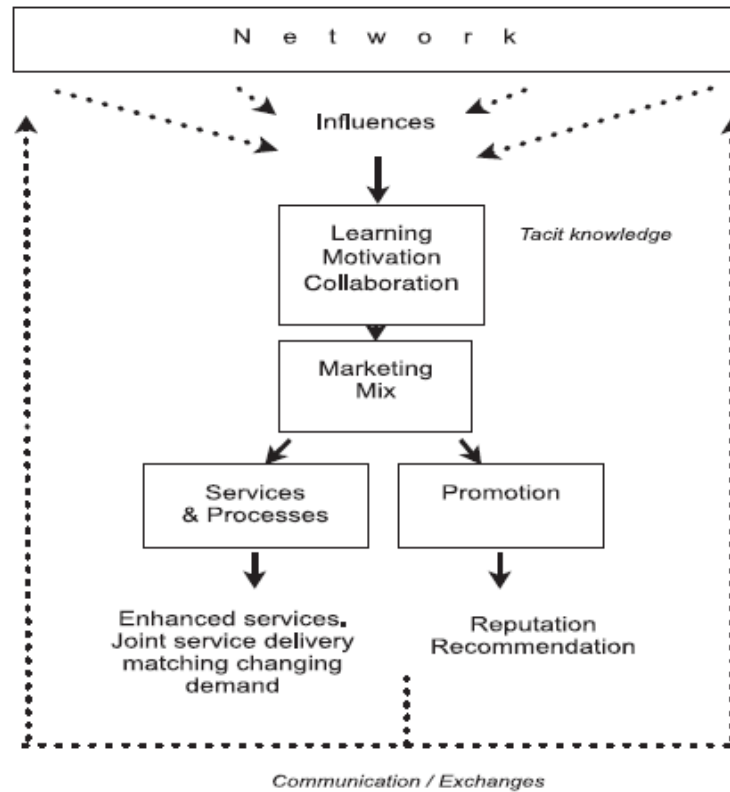


Exhibit 2.8: From Menelec and Jones (2015): Influence of networks on small professional business services' marketing

To effectively compete in the global market, SMEs are required to improve networking skills and make use of digital networking for cross-border collaboration and resource sharing. While developed nations focus on technology, international orientation, and innovation, semi-peripheral economies such as Malaysia focus on capital, brand, and branding as an important success factor (Sudibyo et al., 2023). Strategically, SMEs can

better network to facilitate deeper market access, better operational performance, and sustained business growth in the context of globalization.

Interestingly, Sudibyo et al.'s (2023) findings parallel with entrepreneurial networking via McKinsey's 7S Framework, particularly as they concern Malaysian SMEs. The study emphasized strategic elements such as ecommerce, technology adoption, international orientation, and strategic planning, resonating with the "Strategy" component of the McKinsey 7S Framework. Additionally, Sudibyo et al. underscored the critical roles played by skilled labour and competent owners, which is also aligning with the "Skills" element of the framework. On top of that, the study also emphasized networking capabilities, market penetration strategies, and organizational performance, aligning with the "Shared Values," "Systems," and "Style" components of the McKinsey model, respectively. Moreover, they highlighted factors such as government support, market orientation, and external environment considerations discussed in the study align with the "Structure" component of the McKinsey model. Importantly, earlier study conducted by Sudibyo et al. (2023) provided valuable insights into key success factors (as illustrated in exhibit 2.9) that Malaysian SMEs can leverage when applying the McKinsey 7S Framework to enhance their competitiveness in the global marketplace. But more analysis and recommendation are to be made to bridge the gap of a network model and current context.

Ecommerce, technology, and social media	Singapore	Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia	
International oriented	Singapore		
Good management system	Singapore		
Government support	Singapore		
Working condition/ environment		Vietnam, Malaysia	
Financial/ Fund support	Singapore	Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia	
Skill and competency labour/ owner	Singapore	Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia	
Market penetration/ selection		Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia	Cambodia, Laos
Policy		Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam	Laos
Innovation	Singapore	Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia	
Creativity		Malaysia	
Organizational performance and characteristics		Malaysia, Thailand	
Networking with government/ supplier/ customer	Singapore	Malaysia, Thailand	
Leadership		Malaysia	
Planned/ Strategy (business/ market/ operational/ organizational)		Malaysia	
Branding product/ name		Malaysia, Indonesia	
Packaging		Malaysia	
Quality product	Singapore	Thailand, Indonesia	
Motivation			Cambodia, Laos
Product development		Malaysia	
Organizational readiness	Singapore		

Exhibit 2.9: Cited from Sudibyo et al. (2023): Key Success Factors for SMEs

SMEs are essential in the context of modern business especially in sales and marketing as core functions that generate revenue (Sudibyo et al., 2023). Their marketing strategies are often tailored to achieve specific business objectives while network structures greatly determine their effectiveness (Menelec & Jones, 2015). These external factors, for instance, changes in a market or a merger, can affect such networks. However, strong interconnections that are based on goodwill and collaboration foster enduring ties.

Networking entrepreneurs can take advantage of greater business opportunities by using different flexible marketing strategies. Although many SMEs are not actively employing their networks as a marketing tool, such networking activities have particularly great effects on business transactions in the service sector where marketing and cognition and reputation management are prevalent. Having a network as part of the daily operations enables firms to move from ad-hoc interactions to systematic interactions with clients, thereby enhancing relationships and promoting growth.

2.7.2 Discussions and Critiques

Networking serves as an invaluable marketing and business development tool among SMEs due to its relative cost effectiveness compared to traditional advertising. Many SMEs remain bounded by financial and operational constraints that inhibit them from utilizing conventional marketing channels, which is why networking has become an indispensable strategy for relationship-building, resource acquisition, and competition enhancement (Shekar et al., 2021; Nazaruddin et al., 2024). Throughout the years, networking has shifted from being an optional practice to an indispensable business strategy through the dismantling of rigid hierarchical structures and the emergence of more flexible and dynamic networks. This shift enables SMEs to better respond to market fluctuations, improve sustainability, and stimulate innovation (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995).

The success of entrepreneurial networking stems from several reasons. Active participation in formal and informal networks enables SMEs to obtain vital resources, industry information, and partnership opportunities (Shekar et al., 2021). Strong trust and commitment within network members enhance partnerships, facilitate resources, and sustain businesses for the long-term (Nazaruddin et al., 2024). Moreover, network diversity and density are critical in increasing innovation as broader networks provide

new ideas and opportunities, while high-density networks with many connections provide great support (Granovetter, 1973; Gloor et al., 2021). Furthermore, the use of digital tools has become more significant, providing greater access to markets, enhanced communication, and more efficient operations (Nazaruddin et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, SMEs are challenged to take advantage of networking opportunities. Their limited financial and human resources often prevents them from establishing strong networks, which, in turn, leads to a lack of essential contacts and market information (Gloor et al., 2021). Also, resistance to digital transformation due to high costs, lack of digital skills, and inadequate infrastructure further limits their ability to network using technology (Nazaruddin et al., 2024). In addition, focusing on the number of networks instead of their quality can be counterproductive because meaningful engagement with contacts is more important than adding names to a contact list (Gloor et al., 2021).

Digitalization in SMEs is both a blessing and a curse; it allows for more efficient networking, but has raised risks in cybersecurity, finance, and other areas (Nazaruddin et al., 2024). Decision-making and behavioral factors such as leadership styles and organizational culture have a technological impact on networking as well (Gloor et al., 2021). To fully capitalize on their networks, SMEs need to put in place a strategic and flexible proactive approach.

In order to create sustainable growth, SMEs need to ensure that networking tools are appropriate, adapt quickly, and foster strong relationships. To promote long-term business sustainability, overcoming economic and technological obstacles must be prioritized. Remarkably, wireless networking technologies can offer remarkable opportunities for changes that SMEs can adopt quickly. In a world that is increasingly

interconnected, SMEs need to consider adopting a more dynamic perspective to become one step ahead of their competition (Shekar et al., 2021; Nazaruddin et al., 2024).

2.8 Entrepreneurial Networking Model/Framework

2.8.1 Introduction

Networking among entrepreneurs is important towards achieving business goals and call for strong theoretical justification of the relationships that exist among the business, market and strategic management. The researcher will be comparing three entrepreneurial networking model/framework namely: The **Actor-Network Theory (ANT)**, **Market-as-Network Theory (MNT)** and **McKinsey's 7S Framework** aiming to offer and integrate many facets of modern entrepreneurial networking. These theories/frameworks provide a set of explanations which are integrated and cover the external and internal sides of entrepreneurial networks, thus facilitating the understanding of how businesses build, maintain and grow their networks in an increasingly digital and global environment. Below are the short brief descriptions of each model/framework and its rationale why these theories are chosen.

Latour (2005) argued ANT that success in business relies on the socio-technical context surrounding it. This means that success depends not only on people's efforts but also on the relationships between humans and non-humans such as technology, policies, programs, and institutions (Callon, 1991). Akrich et al., (2021) and Venturini (2022) emphasize that the theory of ANT is necessary for integrating digital and technological actors, for mapping dynamic interdependencies, and for value co-creation and innovation in contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystems.

MNT, which Håkansson and Snehota (1995) pioneered, views markets as intertwining networks and not as rigid, separate economic entities. It argues that market participants are interrelated in such a way that business firms actively work together as opposed to remaining passive competitors (Johanson & Mattsson, 2015). Building trust and relationships is the major concern for SMEs that depend on networks for finance, knowledge, or market access (Håkansson et al., 2009). Firms must be prepared to adopt more flexible networking strategies in light of the changes that have come about through globalization and digitalization (Gadde et al., 2021).

McKinsey's 7S framework approach strategies developed originally by Peters and Waterman (1982), and it concerns itself with the strategy of internal organization networking. It correlates the internal assets like leadership and skills, with the external networking strategies to make sure that there is coherence when it comes to marketing (Ravanfar, 2015). The incorporation of digital transformation into the framework is advocated for by the use of AI marketing and CRM software, with automation of other tasks improving networking (Sull et al., 2020). Trust and business collaboration is enabled by Leadership and shared values within networks (Kaplan & Norton, 2022).

Applying this in Malaysian context allows the implementation of the framework of the integrated entrepreneurial networking model specifically designed for Malaysian SMEs. Socio-technical relations that are ANT guide the MNT which describes the market as a complex of relationships, and the 7S framework ensures that the internal organization match with networking patterns. With this comprehensive approach, one is able to examine the parameters of networking success in a more holistic way, while at the same time being able to suggest methods juniors like SME growth, resilience, and sustainable development in changing markets.

2.8.2 Use of McKinsey 7S Framework for Core Research Analysis Over ANT & MNT

The analysis is based on the McKinsey 7S Framework because of its emphasis on both internal strategic alignment and external networking, which is particularly useful for SMEs pursuing sustainable competitive advantages. The framework is more comprehensive than ANT and MNT, which center on external relations because the 7S allows the evaluation of internal organizational factors, including leadership, skills, and systems, that influence networking strategies (Kaplan & Norton, 2022).

Unlike ANT, McKinsey's 7S model integrates internal resources with networking activities, ensuring strategic integration (Barney, 2021). This framework helps in solving organizational alignment issues which are internal problems that external networking success is dependent on (Sull et al., 2020). It also helps adapt to the digital and global business environment through the inclusion of networks, digital transformation, and flexible leadership and operational agility (Miller & Friesen, 2021).

One notable feature of the 7S Framework is that it integrates internal skills with external market opportunities, enabling SMEs to build and maintain their networks effectively (Porter & Kramer, 2021). McKinsey's model, unlike ANT and MNT, ensures that the firm's internal networking readiness is matched with adequate internal networking support. The framework empowers SMEs to engage in entrepreneurial networking and, in doing so, strategically align the business's the strategy, structure, and systems, thereby forming competitive and scalable business networks. This structured method is vital for SMEs that need to grow and sustain themselves in ever-evolving markets. How ANT and MNT aid in entrepreneurial networking using the McKinsey 7S framework will be addressed in the following section.

2.8.3 The Actor's Network Theory

The McKinsey 7S model and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach organizational analysis from different perspectives but they share some conceptual similarities. The 7S model delves into seven interconnected components, in an organization align with: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, staff and style. These elements are deemed interdependent as discussed. And they are essentially created with harmonization for effectiveness. The model serves as a tool to evaluate efficiency in which identifying issues and steering change efforts.

In contrast, Actor Network Theory (ANT) presents organizations as networks of interconnected actors. Both human and non-human factors. ANT underscores the role of agency and how actors (referred to as "actants" in ANT) collaborate and create networks to achieve their objectives. Unlike the fixed structures assumed by the McKinsey model, ANT views structures as emerging from actor interactions.

Cognition, relationships, and resource access are integrated and shape how network members interact and decide, as well as participate (Welch & Wilkinson, 2002; Burt, 2021). Most managers do not recognize or appreciate their role in networking, resulting in negative patterns of strategy implementation and resource allocation; however, participation and reciprocity improve business relationships and strategic clarity (Ottesen et al., 2002; Obstfeld, 2022; Hallen et al., 2020). The success of a network is a product of the quality and depth of engagement within it, rather than its mere use, which reinstates the importance of trust and collaborative structures in business ecosystems (Östüner & Iacobucci, 2012; Jack et al., 2022).

According to Actor-Network Theory (ANT), network structures are shown to change radically as a result of technology and institutional change (Callon, 2021; Venturini, 2022). Entrepreneurial networks cannot be considered to be fixed; rather, they are in constant flux as actors engage with each other, move around the network, and respond to the market. ANT shows that networks for entrepreneurs are not homogenous; variation exists depending on one's position, resources, and past experiences (Broad, 2012). Imbalances in power also account for network efficiency, whereby entrepreneurs at the core of rich networks derive greater benefit in comparison to those occupying poor, resource-deficient positions (Gulati & Turco, 2022). In contrast with structural network theories, ANT provides understanding of how networks are viewed, trusted, and risked, and positioned strategically, which differs from the structural interpretation.

As argued by Callon (2021), digital transformation further impacts networking through the adoption of non-human actors like AI-powered recommendation systems, which create connections and opportunities. Social media, alongside algorithms and digital platforms, has changed the accessibility of resources as well as the decision-making process, which is now bordering on possibly participating in entrepreneurship. Self-efficacy is another psychological factor along with social capital, as higher self-efficacy allows entrepreneurs to better navigate networks (Gulati & Turco, 2022). Policies and financing regulations are market institutions that also shape entrepreneurial networks by enabling or restricting access to venture capital and protection of intellectual property rights (Venturini, 2022).

The ARA framework (Actors, Resources, and Activities) provides a modification to ANT with emphasis on how networking is defined as engagement, allocation of capital resources, and strategic cooperation (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). This integrates approach highlights the need for structured formal business collaboration and informal

social trust construction. Even in the form of informal social relations, ANT acknowledges the socially constructed network through which the relations are formed, particularly in the sectors undergoing rapid digitization such as e-commerce and fintech (Hinterhuber & Liozu, 2020).

Although ANT provides tools for analyzing evolving networks alongside digital transformations, it offers far less structured context for performance evaluation compared to frameworks such as McKinsey's 7S model (Miller & Friesen, 2021). McKinsey's model offers internal strategic alignment assessment, but ANT exceeds in describing shifts in networks, relationships among actors, and adaptive responses. In conclusion, the integration of both perspectives makes it possible to have a holistic understanding of entrepreneurial networking by providing anthropological explanations of organization and business networks within the context of a digital economy.

2.8.3.1 A Critical Review: Comparing McKinsey 7S Framework to Actor Network Theory (ANT)

From an academic viewpoint, a critical juxtaposition of the McKinsey 7S Framework and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) reveals that the latter is more ineffective than the former, which possesses greater order and efficiency when used to analyze an organization. The McKinsey 7S model is more of a tool for diagnosing and prescribing solutions because it ensures that businesses achieve internal alignment within seven constructed interdependent factors: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, staff, style. These interdependent factors, both for business organization and long-term strategy implementation, are essential for effectiveness and adaptability. On the other hand, ANT may explain how the relationships between human and non-human actors make organizational networks, but has no systematic way of assessing internal business

processes or developing strategic execution plans. Although ANT examines interactions as a network, technology and institutional hypertrophies have an important role to play, the descriptions tend to be vague and the concepts metaphoric, denying ANT any grounded relevance. Unlike McKinsey 7S, which can be noneffective to leaders, strategy, and performance planning, ANT is causally productive but does not pin down an answerable managerial problem. Furthermore, while McKinsey's framework can easily be applied to a wide variety of industries, sizes of organizations, and business functions, ANT's range of application is rather limited to sociotechnical and relational analysis, making it context bound.

The empirical validation enhances the credibility of McKinsey 7S as a tool in corporate strategy, organizational change, and leadership integration, therefore it becomes more valuable to business academics, strategists, and executives. Such supports and limitations in ANT provide a comprehensive picture of network phenomena. However, its absence of explicit evaluation criteria or guiding plans of action renders it less useful for those businesses that need a definitive design for strategic and operational effectiveness. In the end, McKinsey's 7S Framework is a more powerful and practical object for scholarly comparison because its combination of withstanding criticism in theory and applicability in business is what makes it better than ANT in organizational research and management studies.

2.8.4 The Market as Network Theory

Market-as-Network Theory (MNT) counters orthodox economic thought by defining markets not as transactional entities, but as systems of firm- and customer-based institutions (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). In contrast to rigid economic models, MNT considers markets as complex systems that are multidisciplinary and dynamic; value is

created through active collaboration, resource exchange, and the establishment of long-lasting relationships (Johanson & Mattsson, 2015).

The most recent research considers the impact of digital transformation, globalization, and industry convergence on business ecosystems by accentuating the shift from competition towards strategic alliances, business clustering, and digital network formation (Gadde et al., 2021; Baraldi et al., 2022). Major aspects of MNT are relational interdependence where firms co-exist and thrive with sustained interaction (Håkansson et al., 2009); trust and collaboration, which foster more competition (Gulati & Turco, 2022); and market responsiveness, which is the constant motion of adaption to networks (Hinterhuber & Liozu, 2021).

MNT shows that new market opportunities and long-term competitive advantage can result from collaboration of SMEs and startups, enabled by digital platforms, co-branding, and joint ventures (Jack et al., 2022).

The primary differences and complementary features of the two frameworks are provided below:

Aspect	Market-as-Network Theory (MNT)	McKinsey 7S Framework
Focus	External market relationships	Internal organizational alignment
Perspective	Dynamic, relational, and evolving markets	Structured, internal business model
Core Principle	Business success is driven by network interactions and market positioning	Business success is achieved through organizational coherence and internal efficiency
Application	Strategic alliances, business clusters, market co-creation	Internal restructuring, leadership alignment, operational efficiency
Flexibility	Adaptable to changing market dynamics	Requires structured implementation
Key Theorists	Håkansson & Snehota (1995), Johanson & Mattsson (2015)	Peters & Waterman (1982), Kaplan & Norton (2022)
Best Used For	Entrepreneurial networks, SME growth, business ecosystems	Corporate strategy, digital transformation, leadership development

Exhibit 2.10: Key Comparisons of MNT and McKinsey 7S Framework

Market-as-Network Theory illustrates how firms use value relationships to interact within markets. The McKinsey 7S Framework ensures these firms are internally organized to take full advantage of networking opportunities. It is argued that businesses, in this case, require a blended approach because firms that strategically leverage partnerships (MNT) also need to possess internal systems (7S) that facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange (Gulati & Turco, 2022; Hober et al., 2022).

Integrating these models leads to three primary consequences. Start-ups and SMEs need an external network's responsiveness (MNT) and an internal structure's efficiency (7S) in order to sustain growth (Obstfeld, 2022). Many tech start-ups that depend on venture capital networks face difficulties because their internal structures are too weak for operational efficiency. Successful adaption to change in the market (MNT) is also seen to correlate with investment in the development of internal capabilities (7S). Companies like Tesla and Amazon illustrate this as they are externally responsive, but

have strong internal systems (Jack et al., 2022). Finally, effective networking is contingent upon a strong leadership-strategy-culture relationship where companies that engage in collaborative market strategies (MNT) and strong internal leadership (7S) have marked competitive advantages (Gulati & Turco, 2022).

As MNT works on external relations, the McKinsey 7S Framework balances that by ensuring the organization is ready to take advantage of these opportunities. There is a growing trend in modern business towards the confluence of systems thinking with networking for the purpose of sustainable development. To succeed in a changing global economy, entrepreneurs, SMEs, and corporations must grapple with external market boundaries and internal organizational boundaries simultaneously.

2.8.4.1 A Critical Review: Comparing McKinsey 7S Framework to Market-as-Network Theory (MNT)

The McKinsey 7S Framework is more effective than Market-as-Network Theory (MNT) for design organizational structure, business strategy, and academic research because it is more comprehensive in its approach. While MNT concentrates on intermarket relationships, the McKinsey 7S model offers a systematic approach to evaluate and integrate internal competencies with strategy, leadership, and operations. (Kaplan & Norton, 2022)

In contrast to MNT's flexibility, the McKinsey 7S approach provides a clear diagnostic framework that guarantees firms' internal processes are in conjunction with external networking processes (Baraldi et al, 2022). MNT offers a detailed account of market relations but has no proactive means to enhance internal productivity. In contrast, McKinsey 7S provides internal efficiency by leading an organization through

transformation and restructuring processes to achieve strategic alignment. (Hinterhuber & Liozi, 2021)

Also, in order to achieve sustained market success, integrating these functions with the leadership and human resources structures ensures that internal control is maintained, which the McKinsey 7S Framework facilitates. MNT places focus on external inter-firm relationships and inter-firm collaborations without taking the internal strategic balance into account, which makes it less useful for firms having problems with leadership or organizational disintegration. (Gulati & Turco, 2022)

McKinsey 7S dominates the competition in its scope of application as it is designed to work with all business types, including small-to-medium sized enterprises and multinational corporations. Its practical validation through years of business research also strengthens the reliability of the framework (Obstfeld, 2022). On the other hand, the applicability of MNT is limited to the interfirm collaborative regions like supply chains and industrial marketing along with that MNT also low relevance outside these regions (Baraldi et al., 2022).

Addition conceptual research has shown that MNT, however, remains highly theoretical and does not provide any organized, practical instructions, while McKinsey 7S has proven effective in business performance, change management, and even digital transformation (Gadde et al., 2021). While attempting to explain market relationships, MNT definitely contributes more than McKinsey 7S, yet McKinsey 7S provides a complete, holistic approach to better business performance. The systematic, strategically structured, and implemented nature of the model makes it appealing for

scholars, business strategists, and corporate leaders as it helps in dealing with competition and ever-changing business environments.

2.8.5 McKinsey 7S Framework

The McKinsey 7S Framework optimizes external networks and business components to promote entrepreneurial networking amongst Malaysian SMEs. Given the challenging and aggressive SME environment in Malaysia, networking is essential for business development, sustainability, and expansion. Rather than ANT and MNT which emphasize external relations, the McKinsey 7S model guarantees internal alignment and networking provisions which enables SMEs to build, maintain and grow their networks proficiently (Kaplan & Norton, 2022; Jack et al., 2022).

The framework helps SMEs to integrate strategy, structure, and systems with other key components like leadership, skills, and value-oriented business relationships (Obstfeld, 2022). In a globalized and digitally-transformed world, the 7S model prepares SMEs for rapid shifts in technology and transnational networking opportunities (Gulati & Turco, 2022). This element of change is vital for innovation, enduring competitiveness in the market, and retaining economic strength for the foreseeable future.

Earlier studies validate the model's use in fostering competitiveness in the short, medium, and long-term. Elements such as capabilities, workforce, and operational structures enable firms to respond effectively to changes in the external environment, achieve competitive edge, and enhance strategy implementation (Kumar, 2019). Other studies have also pointed out the framework's applicability in digital transformation (Kocaoglu & Demir, 2019), corporate policy formulation (Baishya, 2015), and human capital strategy (Ramdhani et al., 2022). Although its use is rampant in corporate

strategy, very little is known about its use in SMEs, which makes this research relevant in addressing this issue.

This study treats McKinsey's 7S as an intermediary model for entrepreneurial networking aimed at assisting SME owners as stakeholders to improve their effectiveness in networking. Most of the existing studies concentrated on the private sector, but this study seeks to demonstrate how the model can be used to formulate networking strategies for SMEs aimed at achieving sustainable growth. Nowadays, they not only need technical skills but also the ability to network to enhance business performance and the firm's reputation in the industry. In light of these transformations, McKinsey's 7S Framework is primarily known as a corporate strategy tool, but it is becoming apparent that it is also emerging as a major vehicle of value creation in networking for entrepreneurs, thus fostering socio-economic development.

2.8.5.1 Conclusion: Why McKinsey 7S is a Preferred Model for Assessing Entrepreneurial Networking Framework in Malaysian SMEs

By integrating both the internal components of the organization with external networking resources, the McKinsey 7S Framework provides a comprehensive method for improving network entrepreneurialism amongst Malaysian SMEs. Competition and evolution of businesses in Malaysia calls for unlimited networking that allows for growth, sustainability, and diffusion into new markets. Unlike MNT and ANT, which are externally focused, the 7S framework guarantees that there is strategic integration, there is effective leadership, and there is productivity at the organizational level to enable the SMEs to create, maintain, and expand their networks (Kaplan & Norton, 2022; Jack et al., 2022).

This model makes it possible for SMEs to actively sustain a competitive edge because they can strategically formulate disintegrated strategies, structures, and systems that address emerging opportunities and market challenges. This model also allows flexibility which helps SMEs respond to changes in customer needs, market trends, and changes in the business environment. Furthermore, it improves organizational effectiveness by increasing resource and outcome efficiencies. The model encourages the SMEs to engage in proactive and self-initiated strategic networking and collaboration using the 7S framework, which helps SMEs leverage their combined capabilities and undergo market growth and innovation. This model also integrates business and environmental, social, and economic strategies, making it easier for customers and investors prioritizing sustainability to aid in the growth of the business, thus promoting sustainability (Obstfeld, 2022).

The incorporation of networking within the 7S framework helps SMEs configure their internal resources such as leadership, skills, and relationships with external networking activities. Within the framework, emphasis on shared values, leadership, and adaptability gives trust, cooperation, and innovation toward business relationships as position for success (Gulati & Turco, 2022). Unlike the MNT and ANT where focus is mainly on market relations, the 7S model integrates internal organizational alignment with external networking efficiency. This provides a far-reaching and long-lasting business growth strategy (Jack et al., 2022).

As the pace of globalization and digital transformation quickens, SMEs have to respond to new technologies and shifts in competition. Adaptability is a key feature of the McKinsey 7S framework which makes it useful for the entrepreneurial network model where structures and strategies are changed at the discretion of the markets. It enables the aligning of internal processes with external market environment, which not only

encourages strategic networking, but also means better business performance and competitive edge for the SMEs.

Ultimately, the McKinsey 7S Framework is the most appropriate model to evaluate and enhance entrepreneurial networking among the Malaysian SMEs. It ensures that businesses remain operable, competitive and strategically poised for growth by modernizing Malaysia's business environment. With the assistance of such a framework, SMEs are able to formulate sustainable business strategies that augment networking, foster innovation, and realize enduring success in organizational objectives.

2.9 Adoption of McKinsey 7S Framework for Research Analysis and its Relevance

The McKinsey 7S Framework integrated approach considers both internal organizational capabilities and external network activities for entrepreneurial networking, making it more structured and comprehensive. Compared to other theories like ANT and MNT that approach relationships from the outer market, McKinsey's version ensures that SMEs are network-exposed strategically for the health of the business in the foreseeable future. It integrates the fundamental elements of an organization, which are strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, staff, and leadership to achieve sustainable networking balance among SMEs in Malaysia (Kaplan & Norton, 2022; Jack et al., 2022).

Networking constitutes a major strategy in entrepreneurial business, therefore networking activities ought not to be random (Sull et al., 2020). Such a dynamic and flexible organizational structure also allows for the effective use of resources and collaborative efforts from SMEs (Gartner, 2022). Networking processes can also be automated through the use of integrated technology such as CRM systems and AI

powered analytics, which improves participation and interaction (Hinterhuber & Liozu, 2020).

As Porter and Kramer (2021) illustrate, businesses with underlying ethical and cultural values centered around trust and shared core values work towards developing stronger, sustainable partnerships. Thus, Polizzi et al. (2021) argue that entrepreneurial skills such as communication, negotiation, and general relationship management are necessary for effective networking and demonstrate the need for a more integrated approach towards skill development. From a social networking perspective, Miller and Friesen (2021) emphasize the necessity of recruiting and training employees with strong social skills, so that strategic alliances can be formed and sustained over time. Visionary leaders employ innovative approaches such as active collaboration and market innovation, and so Hinterhuber and Liozu (2020) argue that a leader's networking culture is significantly influenced by their leadership style.

In comparison to ANT and MNT that focus on outside peripheral linkages, the 7S framework ensures that SMEs actively integrate networking as part of basic business processes, building friendly collaborative relationships among employees and utilizing relations building-centered technologies. The model integrates both internal structural components and external networking activities which is why it takes a comprehensive view of entrepreneurial networking. The McKinsey 7S framework provides a robust and flexible means through which Malaysian SMEs can attain sustainable growth and competitive dominance in the long term, especially as they try to adjust to an ever-changing integrated and digitized global business landscape.

2.10 Social Network Theory as Underpinning Theory

2.10.1 The Entrepreneurial Social Network Perspective

Social Network Theory (SNT) focuses social relationships and their importance in entrepreneurship. It explains how social connections serve as important relationships for acquiring information and opportunities. Coleman (1988) defined relationships as a form of social capital and Burt (1997) advanced the observation of structural holes, which postulate that some entrepreneurs positioned between socially disconnected groups have access to different and diverse information and business opportunities.

More recently, these studies empirically validate the relevance of bonding and bridging social capital and performance in a business venture (Zhang et al., 2021). Network size and density along with the strength of ties have been found to significantly determine business growth patterns (Wang et al., 2022). This study attempts to understand entrepreneurial networking as a deliberate and goal-oriented activity, consonant with System Networking Theory, to assist novice entrepreneurs in developing networks that would enable them to succeed in business.

Mitchell (1962) describes a social network as a nexus of social actors who share more enduring rather than casual relationships. For useful business connections to be established, there has to be sustained engagement, which is the philosophy of some organizations such as Business Network International (BNI) (Greve & Foss, 1990). This study aims to use System Networking Theory to model entrepreneurial networking to show how an entrepreneur can deliberately and meaningfully enhance their social networks to benefit their business for growth and success.

The social network approach underscores the elements of relationships and the trust established among individuals fostering a network characterized by social cohesion and positive interactions (Mitchell, 1962). Paasche et al. (1993) highlighted that social network theory revolves around nodes (individuals) and connections which collectively shape the network framework. To review this at a glance refer to Exhibit 2.11.

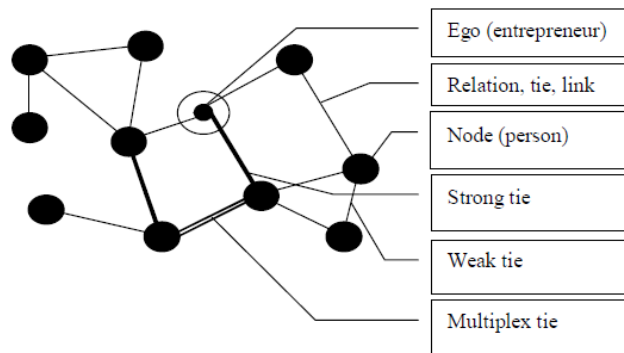


Exhibit 2.11: Nodes And Links in Network Perspective originated by Paasche et.al. (1993) cited in Jenssen (1999).

This research analyzes how social networks impact entrepreneurial achievement, particularly in the context of relationships needed for resource mobilization and opportunity capture. According to Jenssen (1999), two important features of a network are its “density,” which indicates the number of interrelationships that exist within the network, and redundancy, which quantifies how many of the Interrelationships within the network are interconnected. Density captures the number of connections formed in a network, while redundancy captures the relationships’ quality; both are fundamental aspects of any network.

Burt (1997) in his theory of structural holes argues that more information and opportunities become available to an entrepreneur who sits in the middle of two or more disconnected social networks. Johannisson (1988) also postulated that such networks provide financial, material, and cognitive resources necessary to succeed as an entrepreneur. This is exemplified by the Business Network International (BNI), which focuses on establishing strong long-term relationships, structured networking, and referral-based business activity.

BNI's methods correspond to the model created by McKinsey, where strategy, structure, and systems intertwine with shared values, skills, staff, and style of leadership. This model of networking allows for tracking referrals quickly and easily, facilitating better collaboration and leadership development. Entrepreneurs who develop meaningful and sustained interactions within their networks instead of accumulating weak ties are likely to be more successful in business.

The Social Network Theory (SNT) explains the phenomenon of networking which is highly strategic in nature. SNT disagrees with the classical theories of entrepreneurship from the perspective of social ties facilitating the development of relationships and opportunities. As networking has become popularized as a focal point in modern entrepreneurship education, Aldrich and Zimmer (1986), and Wellman and Berkowitz, (1988) remark its effect on intra-firm relationships, business-to-business relations, and referral networks.

Modern approaches to the study of social networks regard their ancestry as coming from structural sociology or social anthropology, showing how social networks operate and impact the entrepreneurial phenomena. Effective entrepreneurial networking is

more than mere interaction, it is about the manipulation and management of social capital. Entrepreneurs making use and understanding these concepts can create powerful networks that aid in business expansion and maintenance over time.

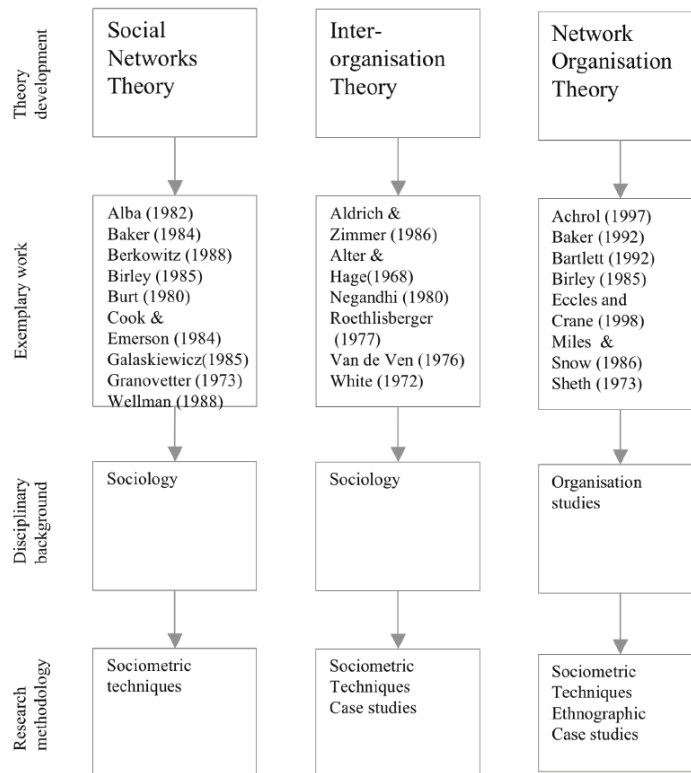


Exhibit 2.12: A Comparison of Network Approaches 1 (Theory Development) originated and cited from Broad (2012, p.39)

The examination of network theories begins with Social Network Theory, widely acknowledged by contemporary researchers as the foundational theory for all subsequent networking approaches. Although Exhibits 2.12 and 2.13 portray a structured progression of network theories in chronological order, it is important to note that these charts were created more than a decade ago. Consequently, there may be a gap in the current development of various approaches to understanding

networking, and there appears to be significant overlap within the comparisons presented in the charts themselves.

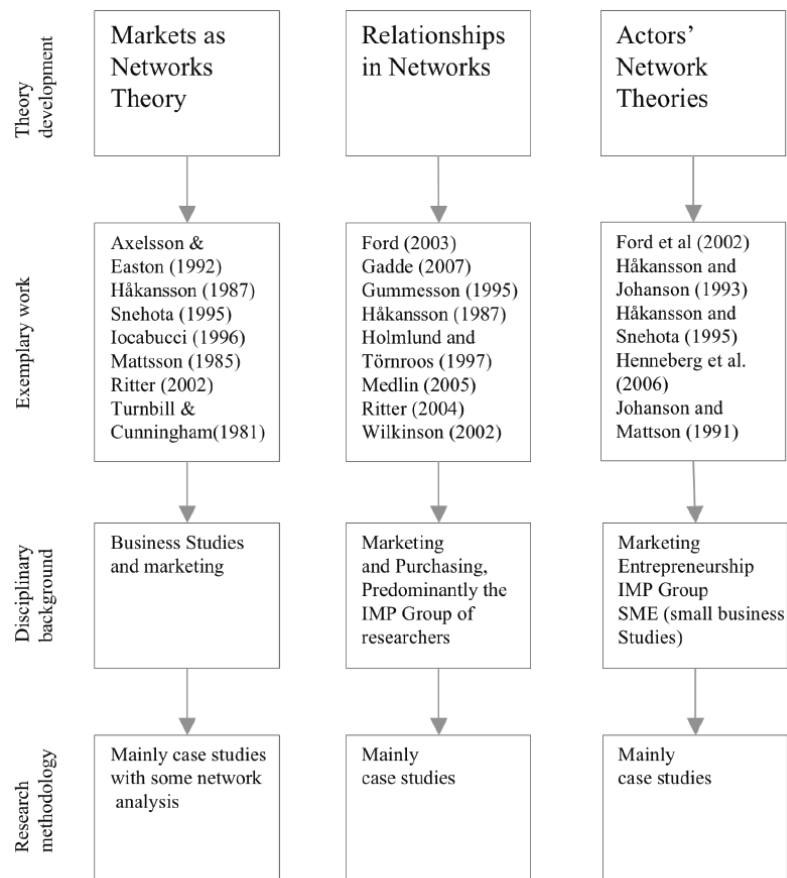


Exhibit 2.13: A Comparison of Network Approaches 2 (Theory Development) originated and cited from Broad (2012, p.40) - Continued

This segment discusses the importance of networking towards the success of an entrepreneur, in particular, its contribution towards developing business contacts, obtaining pertinent information, and expansion. Business networking comprises a set of ongoing relationships among many stakeholders, including SMEs, large companies, and MNCs (Ford et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the benefits of networking are not the same for everyone, and not all participants obtain benefits in real terms (Nohria & Eccles, 1992).

The Social Networking Theory (SNT) offers a basic starting point for appreciating the impact of relationships in the context of resource mobilization, information dissemination, and business efficiency. This is important for Malaysian SMEs, which are vital in economic development, yet face challenges such as insufficient financing, low technology, and restricted markets. Research confirms that degree of connectivity within the network improves business performance (Surin & Wahab, 2013), while social networks aid in knowledge diffusion and innovation (Chin & Lim, 2012; Hassan & Shahzad, 2021).

This study applies SNT to an Entrepreneurial Networking Framework for Malaysian SMEs within the context of network analysis, enhancing strategic collaboration and resource capture; increasing centrality of SMEs, enabling them to be more visible and influential; controlling strong or weak ties, balancing reliance on trust and support as well as on new ideas; and culture specificity, using local business practices to build confidence and collaboration.

Further research confirms that networking is a crucial facilitator of the connection between business alertness and performance, helping SMEs to operate successfully within Malaysia's competitive environment (Satar et al., 2024). The incorporation of social network theory (SNT) in their networking strategies enhances resource mobilization, knowledge flow, adaptability, competitiveness, innovation, and long-term sustainability among Malaysian SMEs.

2.10.2 The Social Network Theory and Its Relevance with McKinsey 7S

The Social Network Theory (SNT) and the McKinsey 7S Framework remain unparalleled theoretical lenses for developing understanding on entrepreneurial networking and

organizational performance. SNT sheds light on the role of social capital and the intricate web of interpersonal relations and information flow in the attainment of success in business (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 1997). It emphasizes the importance of the number of networks, their density, and mix of strong and weak ties, which are vital for business growth and resource availability (Zhang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Entrepreneurs are bound to have better competitive positions in relation to those who poorly embed themselves in networks in terms of resource mobilization, market opportunities, and innovation diffusion.

In contrast, the McKinsey 7S Framework is concerned with the internal dynamics of the organization, where the strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, staff, and leadership style must be synchronized so as to serve the business goals (Kaplan & Norton, 2022). This model does not describe networking, however it offers a means of integrating entrepreneurial networking into the business processes by merging internal capabilities with external networking methods for the business (Ravanfar, 2015). This precise position guarantees that strategic networking is undertaken efficiently, with minimal organizational constraints in terms of direction, operations, and growth.

A combination of SNT and McKinsey 7S proposes a complete framework for entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs. As noted by Surin & Wahab (2013) and Hassan & Shahzad (2021), SMEs face resource limitations, restricted market accessibility, and other technological issues, which makes strategic networking essential for business success. The blending of SNT and McKinsey 7S extends the external market while strengthening the internal organizational structure, thus ensuring sustainable development, resilience, and competitiveness (Abdullah et al., 2021; Naipinit et al., 2014).

While there are benefits to social network analysis, its limitations include excessive focus on structure and neglect of behavior and culture aspects that facilitate network relationships (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Easton & Araujo, 1994). The same critique applies to the McKinsey 7S Framework who fails to recognize network interplay which makes using it for networking approaches notional. This study, therefore, offers a simplistic approach to Malaysian SMEs so that they can put social capital to work without deviating from strong internal cohesion by combining these models.

To conclude, both SNT and McKinsey 7S offer a profound integration that serves as a theory of entrepreneurial networking. There is a reasoning given by SNT on how networking forms impact the flow of resources and market possibilities, and the McKinsey 7S Framework guarantees that internal resources are matched with external networking activities. With the hybrid model approach, Malaysian SMEs are able to improve their adaptability, competitiveness, and sustainability in the long term. This specific study demonstrates how entrepreneurial networking literature is advanced by showing the interrelationship between the network structures and internal organizational alignment and business success in stratified dynamic competitive environments. This framework should be tested for its implementation in different economic and cultural settings, and within diverse SME industries, to investigate its versatility.

2.11 Research Model

A conceptual model was created by the researcher to guide business networking research using the McKinsey 7S Framework to evaluate the scope of the model on entrepreneurial networking. This involved formulating aim statements, evaluating recruitment practices, protocol development, and compliance to ethics. Respondent P3

was chosen for preliminary testing to confirm the framework's applicability for networking research.

In entrepreneurial networking, these elements support the creation of competitiveness achievable through aligned decision making, culture, leadership, and collaboration (The Strategy Institute, 2024). The literature lacks sufficient attention to leadership development, a primary feature of the framework. Shilpa and Jaya (2018) ascertain the relevance of the absence of proper leadership training, while Day and Dragoni (2015) argue that leadership approaches must have corresponding business aims and human resource processes. Business networking is critical as strong stakeholder connections help bridge different organizational segments in a networked environment.

This research seeks to examine the application of the McKinsey 7S Framework in business networking research with specific focus on value creation, leadership development, and strategy integration.

In order to accomplish the objective of the research, the study is designed to formulate an effective strategy within the context of business networking that is focused on value creation. The Entrepreneurial Network Conceptual Model, which is illustrated in Exhibit 2.14, corresponds with these aims. This model will be analyzed in detail in Section 4, while the general conclusions will be presented in Section 5.

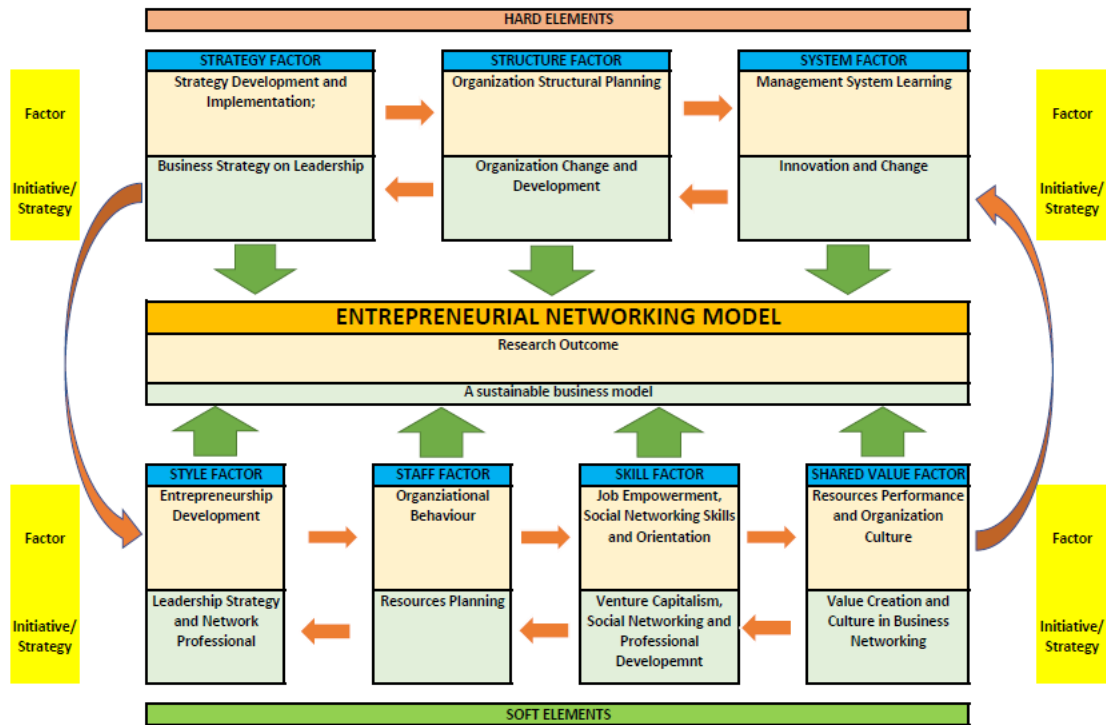


Exhibit 2.14: Preliminary Conceptual Model In Entrepreneurial Networking

Cai et al. (2012) pointed out a gap in the understanding of the relationship between networks and entrepreneurship, which certainly needs more attention. Their conclusions have influenced this research in the selection of the most relevant aspects for entrepreneurial networking model construction.

1. **Venture Creation and Development:** Networking is considered to be a key resource in venture development, but it is not always beneficial. Watson (2007) notes that the link between networking and performance of SMEs is often subject to an inverted U-curve, which depicts the complexity associated with networking and entrepreneurial activity.

2. **Network Processes:** The processes that occur in networks over time are important for the resolution of system bottlenecks. These processes are important for both academics and practitioners, because they deal with the more intricate issues of how networks work and how they should be structured, specifically for the purpose of developing entrepreneurial networking models.

3. **Entities and Individuals:** Carolis and Saporito (2006) draw attention to the near silence regarding the intersection of social capital, personal attributes, and entrepreneurial activity. The exploration of micro-level phenomena is in this case novel and corresponds with the focus of this study on entrepreneurs' perceptions and behaviors in business networks.

4. **Network Orientation (NO):** There seems to be insufficient coverage of the role of NO in entrepreneurship. The findings by Sorenson et al. (2008) demonstrated a relationship between Cooperative Network Orientation (CNO) and firm performance and claimed that the understanding of the outcomes of entrepreneurship from the standpoint of networking orientations is essential.

5. **Entrepreneurial Environment Interactions:** There is still limited evidence of the interactions of the entrepreneurial environment and the networking which appears to be a study gap. In order to appreciate the intricacies and effects of business networking in entrepreneurial ecosystems, it is critical to understand the roles and viewpoints of network participants.

The entrepreneurial environment requires an examination of networks along with contextual international comparisons to evaluate the institutional effects on business

outcomes. Even so, prior work lacks research about how entrepreneurs participate in or actively construct institutions (Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997; Mair and Marti, 2009). Perceptions of entrepreneurs concerning the environmental conditions, in contrast to the reality, is the important part to grasp.

The conceptual model discussed above attempts to fill these gaps using the broad focus and strategy on:

1. Bridging the gap in business progress by developing leadership initiatives
2. Mobilizing stakeholders to foster commitment and collaboration within business.
3. Defining leadership in context to meet business expectations.
4. Promotion of entrepreneurial aspirations for higher motivation towards long term impact of leadership.
5. Inculcation of leadership for effective corporate culture for sustainability and proficiency in the industry.

This work advances the theory of networking in entrepreneurship by adding network relations to development of institutions and leadership for a more holistic understanding of the issue of successful small and medium enterprises.

2.12 Conclusions

The proposed model integrates Social Network Theory (SNT) and the McKinsey 7S Model to develop a useful and practical framework for Malaysian SMEs. This model is intended to overcome specific issues, improve business growth, and foster long-term sustainability.

Hassan (2022) points out that Malaysian SMEs have serious financial problems, low adoption of technology, and inadequate strategic planning. Social networks can help SMEs access helpful resources, relevant information, and necessary business relationships that would otherwise be unavailable. With the application of Social Network Theory (SNT), entrepreneurs are able to effectively make use of both strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973; Mohd Rifin et al., 2023). Strong ties give support in close networks, which may enhance collaborative business-to-business ventures, while weak ties offer new business opportunities that may facilitate market opportunities.

This model also accounts for the Malaysian business environment that integrates trust and relationships as core provisions (Hassan et al., 2023). Along with incorporating McKinsey's 7S Model which focuses on Shared Values, Leadership, and Strategy, the framework is responsive to local custom business practices so that SMEs can relationally network and build sustainable business partnerships. Developing a sophisticated business network, make leadership and strategic decisions, are integral to success. Studies support that strong leadership is a primary influencing factor of entrepreneurial success (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Shilpa & Jaya, 2018). This model strengthens the entrepreneurial capabilities of Malaysian business owners through integrating business-centric sustainable development strategies with structured leadership training.

As digital transformation becomes increasingly important, networking is no longer limited to face-to-face engagement. SMEs can take advantage of digital networking sites, including LinkedIn, B2B portals, and industry-specific forums (Chin & Lim, 2022). This digital shift transcends geographical boundaries, enabling SMEs to forge strategic partnerships and tap into global markets. Moreover, restrictive policy regulations and poor funding opportunities remain some of the barriers to entry for SMEs (Tan, 2011). The model responds to these issues through a network-based cooperation approach

that corresponds with the SME Masterplan 2030 for Malaysia (SME Corp Malaysia, 2022). With stronger collaboration between policymakers, academia, and the business community, SMEs are able to circumvent institutional obstacles and harness policy support.

Competitive intelligence is not possible without strategic and reputational networking. Existing evidence shows that firms with comprehensive networking strategies tend to perform better in revenue and market growth in comparison to firms without any strategic approach (Sorenson et al., 2008; Watson, 2007). Furthermore, SMEs can cultivate sustained growth by strategically managing relationships and fostering collaborative trust alliances adapts to changing market environments.

This model is influenced by several entrepreneurial networking theories that provide a holistic understanding of SME competitiveness. Social Network Theory (SNT) elucidates how the network's structure, tie strength, and centrality affects SMEs' resource access. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) studies the role of human and non-human actors in forming entrepreneurial networks, whereas Market-as-Network Theory (MNT) studies the success of entrepreneurship from the perspective of market relationships interdependence.

This model's integration of Social Network Theory (SNT) and the McKinsey 7S Model offers a more systematic, pragmatic, and flexible approach for Malaysian SMEs to improve networking and market-facing strategies for long-term business sustainability. Such SMEs are ensured through the blend of theoretical insights and practical applications to build strong networks, improve strategic decision-making, and remain competitive in a changing economy. Further studies need to be conducted on the

changes in entrepreneurial networks development so that SMEs will have viable networking methods for business continuity and growth in a challenging economy such as Malaysia.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the method and procedures of the suggested research. Various key components of the research processes included research design, the adaptation of case study approach, sampling design, data analysis, case study protocols and ethical considerations are being formed in this chapter. The researcher has selected case study approach to this research which will drive the research results from the existing studies on the same to a specific perspective by using the McKinsey 7S framework.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

In this section of research design, the researcher provides an overall structure and strategy for the research as intended. In Creswell (1994)'s definition of qualitative research, it is an inquiry process of understanding a social or humanity problem, this is based on the hypothesis of building a complex and holistic manner that formed with words and reported a detail view of informants, and the research will be conducted in a natural setting. Creswell (2005) has further explained what previously defined by Guba and Lincoln (1981) and Merriam (1988) that qualitative research approaches formed by a holistic perspective, with the concentration of discovery and assuming of the meaning in reality is socially constructed and interpreted by individuals in associating within their natural context and real-life experiences.

Berg (1989) argued that qualitative approaches recognized that there are different ways of understanding and supporting social phenomenon thus it relies on providing abundant models to suit one's research point of interest. Data collected from this research approach is focused on real-life phenomenon. Its purpose is letting the respondents/interviewee to provide a more in-depth insight into the topics surrounding the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In the qualitative research, the respondents involved in the most part for the non-numerical data which featured their views from their own's perspectives (Darlington & Scott, 2022). Meanwhile, Babbie (1998) proclaimed that qualitative research's topics are tentative at the beginning and are re-defined throughout the research study. Thus, research questions are developed as the study progresses in the resultant of such data collection uses many ways and varied in different forms. These proposed data's collection methods include interview, direct observation, personal face to face dialogue and document analysis.

Nevertheless, despite the critiques over the qualitative research methodology, Patton (2002) argued that qualitative research methods permit an in-depth detailed study, it has contributed to openness and a detailed view of qualitative inquiry. With this approach, it allowed greater analysis of data pertaining to an individual point of interest or an issue that is worth for discussion related to the research questions. In addition, Warr (2004) affirmed that qualitative research provides a researcher with an opportunity to listen to the respondents on their life experiences, so the method yields rich and comprehensive data. This holistic approach allows the researchers and respondents convey their feelings and experiences in their own way freely and arguably a comfortable approach if the point of discussions spark greater interests from the respondents. Being pragmatically practical is the reason for adapting qualitative

research, especially in situations where quantified research is unnecessary, impossible or inappropriate in nature (Patton, 2002).

Furthermore, qualitative approaches may be more appropriate for the research process which is deemed to have different research objectives in different stages. The qualitative method can be exclusively used to produce a rich detailed information about smaller numbers of people or cases. This increases the detail understanding of the analyzed cases and its situation studies (Grix, 2004). Thus, case study research method will be adopted in this research to investigate and understand a more in-depth insight into the issues which reflected to actual situation which was found to be more appropriate for the nature and context of this research. Organized interview with 15 Malaysian SMEs will be conducted with open-ended questions, attended by the company top management, such as CEO/Managing Director, supported with a more flexible, a live experience based and exploratory new phenomena along the way.

3.3 The Case Study Approach

This is very common to witness many researchers have used the case study method as one of the most frequent qualitative research methodologies since decades ago across a multi discipline of research studies. "However, it still does not have a legitimate status as a social science research strategy because it does not have well-defined and well-structured protocols (Yin, 2002), so emerging researchers who plan to utilize case study usually become confused "as to what a case study is and how it can be differentiated from other types of qualitative research" (Merriam, 1998, p. xi)." (Yazan, B., 2015, p.134). Thus, research methodologists do not always have a consensus on the design and implementation of case study, which makes it a debating battlefield and hampers its full evolution. Nevertheless, case study approach being the most frequent used research methodology by social researchers, or its relevant academicians have adopted this all-

time favorite method to investigate cosmopolitan real-life situations that reflected to contemporary issues and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of research methods (Kitay & Callus, 1998; Kelly, 1999; Hartley, 2004; Parasuraman, 2007).

In this research study, the researcher adopts Yin's (2003) definition of a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a real-life business phenomenon within the research context and boundary, when the boundaries between the real phenomenon and actual context are not clearly palpable and, in which, multiple sources of evidence are used. For example, the case study usually consisted of diverse sources of evidence such as documentation, archival records, interviews and observations (Yin, 2003; Silverman, 2005). These collected data were used as evidence to show the credibility of research findings. The similarity in most of the characteristics in the case study design, presented above were highly match those used in this study. These definitions were used to guide implementation of the study. For instance, Yin (2009) used "the phenomenon of the effectiveness of a flood insurance scheme, as one proposed solution to a community, which was examined through the perspective of literacy coaches within their real-life setting, using multiple sources of evidence" (Chua, 2017). Furthermore, Dachler and Wilpert (1978) proposed a qualitative research approach that is to undertake in generating research questions, and more importantly to address the dynamic nature of this phenomenon.

3.3.1 Types of Case Studies

Merriam (1998) suggested that the type of case studies can be classified in accordance with the research objective and the nature of the research topic. A descriptive case study presents a detailed account of the one typical phenomenon being examined. Meanwhile, an interpretive case study contains detailed descriptive materials, but is categorized by, to a large extent and degree, abstraction, and conceptualization. The suggestion may

be ranging from a possible emergent relationships, categories and typologies, to the development of a standardized theoretical framework. The evaluative case study as suggested by Merriam embraces not only those elements of description and explanation were delivered in the descriptive and interpretive inclined research, but it also integrates the element of judgment by nature.

From a Stake's case study perspective, a precise definition of cases is not realistic since it is highly likely that the exact definition of case study the researcher can come out with will not be aligned with the definition that the users of case study in other disciplines make. As argued by Stake (1995) and in consensus with Smith (1978) rendition: researchers should view case as a "bounded system" and inquire into it "as an object rather than a process". Stake depicts some of the attributes of cases in his interpretation and conceptualized case is "a specific, a complex, functioning thing," more specifically "an integrated system" which "has a boundary and working parts" and goal-directed in related to human sciences. Given this definition, he notes that the method he delineates in his work would be more beneficial to study programs and people but less beneficial to study events and processes, which is somehow a direction of intersection with Yin who finds case study methods a best fit for program/process evaluation. Further to it, Stake stated four defining characteristics of qualitative research which are deemed fit for qualitative case studies as follows: "holistic, empirical, interpretive and empathic". In Stake's interpretation, holistic means the researcher should consider the interrelationship between the phenomenon and its contexts, and this is similar to the undividable link Yin alludes to while defining the case. Empirical means that researcher uses the study on their observations in the field. Interpretive means that researcher rests upon their intuition and interprets research as a subject interaction, which is compatible with the constructivist epistemology. Last not least, empathic means that researcher reflects the empathetic experiences of the subjects in an emic perspective.

Alternatively, there are several types of case studies according to Yin (1994) and Winston (1997). To name a few iconic examples, there are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies. In terms of exploratory case studies, the data collection at the field / research boundary maybe undertaken even before defining a research question. This type of studies was seen as a prelude to a large social scientific study (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, in explanatory case studies, it is useful for conducting the causal studies in particularly related to complex studies of organization or communities, one might desire to employ multivariate cases to assess a variety of impacts. Lastly, descriptive case exploration requires that the researcher present a descriptive theory, which establishes the overall model for the researcher to follow throughout the study (Berg, 1989).

3.3.2 Designs of Case Studies

Yin (2003) segmented case studies into single or multiple studies with holistic or embedded units of analysis. This blend of matrix produces multiple results as shown in Exhibit 4.1 which Yin (2003) developed to suggest a fourfold typology. The matrix shows that every type of design will include the desire to analyze contextual conditions critically in reaction to the case. In this research, the researcher adopted multiple case studies, whereby a number of individual situations were investigated. In a largely contextual situation, this type of study may be highly powerful and result oriented because of its ability to compare and contrast findings (Kitay & Callus, 1998).

The adoption of Yin's approach places a great emphasis on the design of the case study. In this research, the researcher will present a definite detailed and comprehensive approach to the formation of the design with a highly reliable way at every step of the

research process from the initial construction of the research questions to collection and analysis of data in light of prior theoretical propositions to the reporting of the entire research's finding. Yin (2002) suggests four types of design that case study researchers can make use of. They include single holistic design (Type 1), single embedded design (Type 2), multiple holistic design (Type 3) and multiple embedded design (Type 4), refer to the chart next page for better illustration. Holistic designs require one unit of analysis, whereas embedded designs require multiple units of analysis. The design of the case studies in this research can be sub divided into single or multiple studies with holistic or embedded unit of analysis as what Yin (2002) originally designed. The researcher will select the design which provides him with the maximum instrumentality to answer his research questions, and to consider the strengths and limitations of each design and the certain pitfalls to be avoided while implementing each of them. From a Yin's perspective, case study research design is consist of five components: the study's questions; the propositions (if any/necessary); the unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the perspective/information to the propositions; and lastly the criteria for interpreting the findings. While designing the inquiry, the researcher is supposed to make sure that these components are cohesive to and consistent among each other. The researcher will need to plan these elements very conscientiously and meticulously in order that his inquiry has a solid ground for the analytics and critiques.

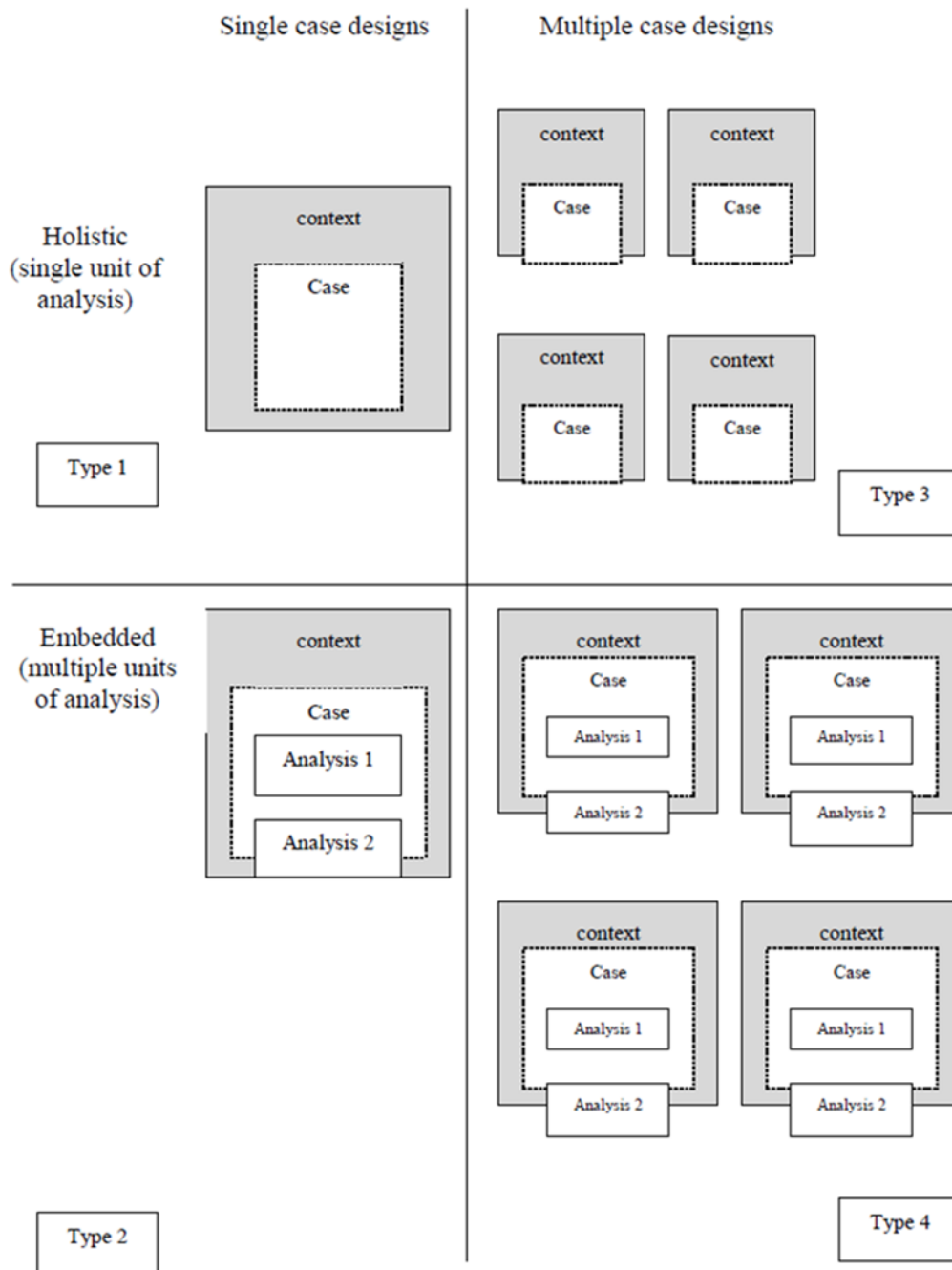


Exhibit 3.1: Case Study Designs, Originally Adopted by Yin (2003)

This portion of the research was developed following qualitative research standards, meaning that each question was formulated based on the research objectives (RO) and

research question (RQ) (Bryman, 2021). The semi-structured interview technique offers some degree of freedom in the replies given, while accuracy is observed with regard to the major thematic areas (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The theoretical framework to study entrepreneurial networking practices among Malaysian SMEs is McKinsey 7S Framework, and the interview questions are designed to assess the different aspects of networking models and SME performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2022)

3.3.2.1 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions and Objectives

The interview questions were developed in such a way that they meet the metrics of the research geared towards entrepreneurial networking, sustainability, and the influence of the McKinsey 7S Framework on SME performance (Jack et al., 2022). Each question is individually and specifically linked to a particular research question (RQ) and research objective (RO), below details supporting with its literature evidence:

1. Interview Question 1: What are the strategies in social networking and attain values? Alignment with RQ1: This question seeks to uncover the specific networking strategies employed by SMEs, directly addressing the current practices of entrepreneurial networking in Malaysia.

Supporting Literature: Networking strategies are significant in value creation and business expansion as described in Gulati & Turco (2022), and Johanson & Mattsson (2021).

1. Interview Question 2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization? Alignment with RQ3: By exploring the

ideal organizational structure for sustainable networking, this question relates to the 'Structure' element of the McKinsey 7S Framework, examining its application in entrepreneurial networking.

Supporting Literature: Research shows that best-designed business networks promote stability and resilience (Hinterhuber & Liozu, 2021).

2. Interview Question 3: How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help? Alignment with RQ3: This question addresses the 'Systems' component, investigating how systematic processes in networking contribute to SME performance.

Supporting Literature: Operational efficiency and strategic collaboration are greatly enhanced through organized networking models (Obstfeld, 2022).

3. Interview Question 4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs? Alignment with RQ3: Focusing on the 'Style' element, this question examines the impact of leadership styles on effective networking.

Supporting Literature: Different approaches to leadership affect success in entrepreneurial networking and trust development (Seah & Hsieh, 2022).

4. Interview Question 5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization? Alignment with RQ3: This question pertains to the 'Staff' and 'Skills' elements, exploring how employee motivation and competencies influence networking success.

Supporting Literature: Networking effectiveness is driven by employee engagement and skill development (Singh, 2021).

5. Interview Question 6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking? Alignment with RQ3: This question delves into the 'Skills' component, identifying skills gained through networking that enhance SME performance.

Supporting Literature: Transferable skills remain vital for the sustainability and growth of SMEs in the long run (Jack et al., 2022).

6. Interview Question 7: What's the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications? Alignment with RQ2: By assessing the value derived from networking, this question highlights its importance for SME growth and sustainability.

Supporting Literature: Entrepreneurial networks facilitate innovation, knowledge, and resource exchange (Gulati & Turco, 2022).

7. Interview Question 8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work? Alignment with RQ3: This question seeks to understand the application of a sustainable networking model, encompassing various elements of the McKinsey 7S Framework.

Supporting Literature: Sustainable networking models promote competitiveness as well as long-term resilience among SMEs (Kaplan & Norton, 2022).

The semi-structured interview approach offers the best blend between research exploration and thematic focus to ensure that the researcher's objectives are met without stifling the respondent's scope of interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). This approach has gained popularity in entrepreneurial networking research, especially in assessing the extent to which SMEs engage in, maintain, and profit from networking activities (Johanson & Mattsson, 2021).

In addition, McKinsey 7S is widely accepted as a theory to assess the networking activities and therefore can be used for formulating the interview questions (Jack et al., 2022). Literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems shows that some internal organizational factors have to correspond with outside market forces, which further justifies the use of McKinsey 7S in entrepreneurial networking (Obstfeld, 2022).

This template of a questionnaire is based on the most up to date scholarly research, which guarantees theoretical depth and real world relevance when evaluating the entrepreneurial networking of SMEs in Malaysia. The interview questions that are guided by the McKinsey 7S Framework are integrated with networking strategies, organizational systems, styles of management, and the sustainability ethos. The meticulous integration of interview questions with research aims and academic scholarly works guarantees that the investigation captures the inter-networking activities of SMEs, contributing to the body of knowledge on the entrepreneurial networking and business sustainability in the context of Malaysia.

3.3.2.2 Questionnaire Design

As illustrated, the design of the questionnaire is being adapted to fit the study. The difference between adopting and adapting a questionnaire for research purposes is

important because it defines how much an existing research tool is applied or changed for a given study.

This study's questionnaire is one that has been modified and adapted to suit a particular context, purpose, or a new theoretical framework of a study (Bryman, 2021). Rewording of the questions, adding or deleting items, shifting the emphasis of the inquiry, or changing the order of the questions to accomplish the particular objectives and research context are all part of adaptation. This method is required in instances where the initial questionnaire does not capture the specific nuances of the research sample, study context, or industry particularities.

This research requires the adaptation of the questionnaire due to:

- 1. Change to Accommodate the Research Context (Malaysian SMEs and Entrepreneurial Networking) :**

While previous research examined networking, leadership, and organizational integration as separate phenomena, this research focuses on Malaysian SMEs and their entrepreneurial networks through these lenses. Thus, the interview questions were tailored to address the specific research questions and objectives pertaining to entrepreneurial sustainability and networking models in Malaysia (Kaplan & Norton, 2022).

- 2. Application of the McKinsey 7S Framework in a Networking Perspective:**

Most of the literature that utilizes the McKinsey 7S framework does so in corporate strategic management. This study seeks to apply it to entrepreneurial networking.

Consequently, the interview questions were designed to consider the role of SMEs in the implementation of the McKinsey 7S components in the building and sustaining of business networks (Jack et al., 2022).

3. Modification for the Research Design and Methodology (Semi-Structured Interviews):

Most networking questionnaires are tailored for structured surveys, but this study sought to use qualitative semi-structured interviews. To maintain a level of flexibility in research and their objectives, the questions were modified in a way that allowed for an open-ended response which enabled the interviewees to provide rich contextual responses (Creswell & Cresswell, 2021).

4. Addressing Distinct Research Elements:

The focus of the study is entrepreneurial networking success alongside sustainability, and leadership styles, which is not always covered in conventional McKinsey 7S based questionnaires. Hence, the modifications needed to be made in order to capture the SME specific networking strategies, which made the adaptational scope's approach in the study (Obstfeld, 2022).

This research's questions used for the survey align with the distinct research context, the theory application, and the qualitative approach employed which is modified or adapted instead of adopted. The dreaded McKinsey 7S framework is kept, however, the focus was shifted to examine the SME's in Malaysia to the context of the questions on entrepreneurial networking so that the context made sense and corresponded to the objectives of the research. Adaptation is what permits the study to preserve the

theoretical rigor while fusing the practical relevance, thus, ensuring the findings are meaningful and trustworthy.

3.4 Sampling Design (Sampling Frame)

The population and sample in this study consists of members of various members of trade associations, chambers of commerce, BNI (Business Network International) members and any other active business networking members. The sample size of this qualitative research is exclusively modest; however it provides an extensive and vital amount of information from the comments of the respondents (Maxwell, 1996). This form of lean description provides detail of the context and explanation of events and situations for those who are involved and investigated (Geertz, 1983). By pursuing a multiple case study design, the samples should share the same characteristics across all cases (Farquhar, 2012). Thus, in this study, the sample size of 15 selected business owners were coming from different sectors of business nature.

There will be personal interview / survey with selected individual/company/organization as prime targeted respondents to find out an in depth understanding of business networking mean to them and explore more on their foresight on the entrepreneurial networking framework with the existing structure and what's the gap to be filled in the future as follows: -

Targeted Respondents
SME Company Director/MD/CEO - who is an active member of any kind of social network organization/platform.
Targeted to achieve minimum 8 -15 Malaysian SME case studies via personal in-depth interview. Respondents from different sectors and with minimum 10 years of operation/business establishment, minimum annual turnover of RM 20 million and hold at least one membership of an active social networking organization.
Through the personal visit will allow the researcher to meet the targeted respondent face to face to formalize and observe the conversation throughout.

Exhibit 3.2: Targeted Respondents

These concentrated samples in this qualitative drive research provides an extensive clear information from the comments and life-long experience that gained among from the entrepreneurs. A conceptual model study will be used as preliminary research to achieve the final aim of the research's objective. This is important and a safety net for the researcher to avoid any failure at later stage if the research method is not properly structured.

3.4.1 Rationale for 15 Respondents in Qualitative Research

For any qualitative research, ensuring sample size adequacy is necessary for reaching data saturation, thematic completeness, and non-trivial interpretation of results. In this research, a selection sample of 15 respondents is compliant with well-known qualitative research practices and is adequate for useful results in the focus area of

entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs. Below are the scholarly reasons and rationales behind:

1. Data Saturation as a Sample Size Sufficiency Criterion:

Data saturation in qualitative research usually refers to the stage of data collection when no new information will be added by collecting further data (Guest, Namey & Chen, 2020). Research has shown that saturation and in particular thematic saturation is quite often reached in the range of 12-15 interviews in homogeneous studies (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The respondents of this study are entrepreneurs and SME owners and as such they have common traits and experiences within the Malaysian networking ecosystem. Hence, 15 respondents are sufficient to achieve adequate thematic saturation.

2. Justification For Qualitative Sample Size Research Justification:

There is an emerging literature suggesting that 15 respondents is sufficient for qualitative research, especially with some organizational behaviors and business strategies. Malterud et al. (2016) argues that smaller sample sizes can be justified by information power, which is determined by study aim, sample specificity, quality of dialogue, and analysis strategy. According to Guest et al. (2020), twelve to fifteen interviews appear to be more than enough in business and organization studies for valid and transferable conclusions to be drawn.

3. Relevance to Entrepreneurship and Business Networking Research:

Fusch and Ness (2021) note that in entrepreneurial networking research, the concentration is on deep contextual understanding rather than statistical representativeness. Since this study seeks to understand the application of

McKinsey's 7S Framework to entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs, a sample size of 15 is optimal as it allows for intensive thematic analysis and data richness.

4. Comparison With Other Established Research Norms:

Hennink et al. (2022) found that 9 to 17 interviews are often enough for a qualitative study to reach saturation, thus supporting 15 as a reasonable sample size. On the other hand, Guest et al. (2020) showed that in business and social research, 12 to 15 interviews often provide adequate thematic coverage for arriving at general conclusions. Additionally, Boddy (2022) claimed that for qualitative research, sample sufficiency rests on how deep rather than broad the inquiry is, thus making the 15 respondents adequate for capturing entrepreneurial strategies as well as business networking activities.

5. Achieving Transferability and Contextual Generalizability:

Although qualitative research typically does not seek statistical generalization, the results can be transferable if sampling is deliberate and the respondents embody the central differences in the population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saunders & Townsend, 2022). Given that this study centers on Malaysian SMEs of varied industry representation, the insights gathered from the 15 respondents is trustworthy and generalizable within this context of entrepreneurship.

The reasoning for selecting 15 respondents in this study rests on the adequacy of evidence, common qualitative research practices, and business research approach. Numerous research as emphasized above confirm that 12-15 interviews suffice to gather rich and meaningful data particularly in entrepreneurial and organizational

strategy research. Considering the homogeneity of the respondents, thematic focus, and research interest, this sample size guarantees that the findings resulting from the study are credible, transferable, and methodologically valid. In this regard, Malaysian SMEs is entrepreneurial networking as a research focus, the justification provided aligns with established qualitative methodologies that undergird why 15 respondents are methodologically sufficient to yield reliable, insightful, and transferable conclusions pertaining to the study.

3.4.2 Unit of Analysis

For this study, the unit of analysis is individual (or as in each entrepreneur). Various of trade association members is involved for the study, they are included Johor Bahru Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCCI), Johor Bahru Furniture Association (JBFA), Johor Master Builder Association (JMBA), Chartered Institute of Building Malaysia (CIOB, Malaysia), Business Networking International (BNI), Malaysia International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MICCI), South Johor Foundry & Engineering Industries Association (SJFEIA) and etc. association or its kind joining as the official entrepreneurial organizations or professional bodies in the research unit of analysis.

The choice of individual entrepreneurs within trade associations as the unit of analysis is justified and relates well to the issue of entrepreneurial networking within Malaysian SMEs (Jack et al. 2022). These entrepreneurs are members of formal networking environments, which makes them suitable for measuring the impact of networking strategies on business performance. They are members of trade associations like JBCCCI, JBFA, BNI, and MICCI, which provide adequate sectoral representation, rest and credibility, and access to established industry networks. This ensures rich qualitative data because these respondents are heads of their companies and, therefore, are

relators of the practices of networking, leadership, and business sustainability (Gulati & Turco, 2022). The study benefits from the legitimacy institutions because the trade associations provide more formalized structures for networking which makes the collection of data easier and ensures higher response rates. Moreover, having the focus on entrepreneurs within formal associations improves the validity and generalizability of the data as the networking across industries can be compared, analyzed, and related to the McKinsey 7S framework (Kaplan & Norton, 2022). This unit of analysis guarantees methodological rigor, credibility of the study, and understanding of the dynamics of entrepreneurial networking in Malaysia and provides rich insights (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher has chosen his business networking associations as his primary target audience. Both primary and secondary data will be collected. Primary data can be collected from the research respondent, through some research instruments such as interview and questionnaire. On the other hand, secondary data will be collected from the existing knowledge and literature which has been published as journals, articles, books, dissertation etc. As elaborated in earlier pages, a few analyses will be used for data collection to establish further research outcomes. The reliability of the measure will need to be ensured the consistency of the measurement across time and such data will be processed and analysed free from bias (Mitchell, ed. al. 2007). The validation of result outcome will be genuinely manipulated and presented as conformance to the university's standard code of practice and live up to the ethical profession. The example of the qualitative research flow as follows: -

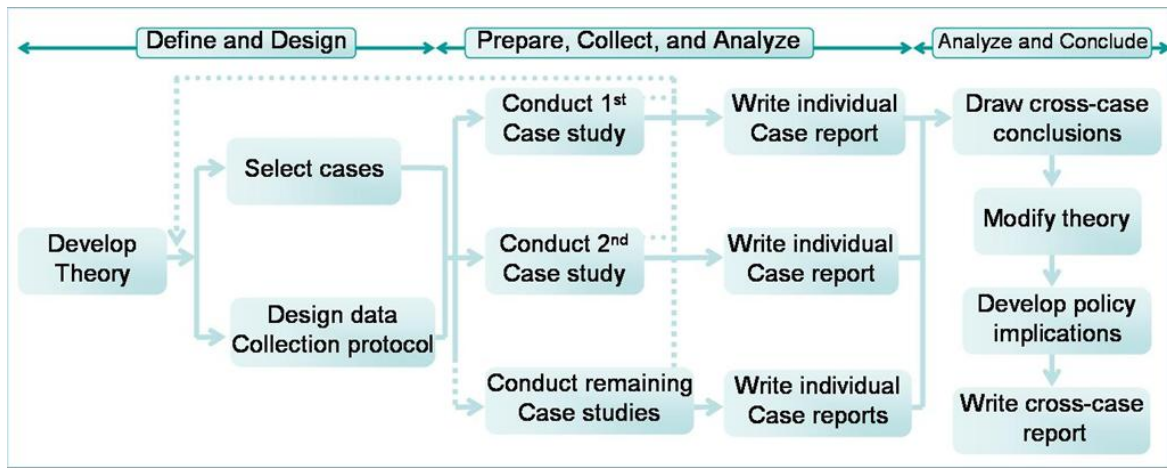


Exhibit 3.3: Qualitative Research Flow as Originally Adopted by (Mitchell, et al. 2007)

3.6 Case Study Protocol

In this research boundary, the research aimed on the individual case study is someone's personal life experience, also it is about the respondent's real story filled with excitement and passion to express their view in responding to the research topics/questions. Their story lines are uniquely reflecting their own success or failure they had encountered. The processes of life experience can involve with many individuals, friends, family, organizations, institutions, programs and even events (Yin, 2003). In principle, case studies are the preferred method when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, secondly, the researcher has little control over the events, and lastly the interview focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context that occurred either in present stage or in the past (Yin, 2009). The main objective of the protocol is to provide a Standard of Procedures (SOPs) in ensuring the researcher can follow and carry out his research smoothly with integrity. The researcher will be expected to comply such SOPs. when carry the investigation to achieve the research objectives, full compliance to this protocol in pursuing a line of inquiry professionally and able to link back to the respective case study's topic. This protocol constitutes a structure agenda for the researcher to follow in order to accomplish the research objectives. The success of the

case study relies on the reliability of the case study protocol which in the case that the research can adhere to it thoroughly and thoughtfully.

3.6.1 Site Meeting/Virtual Meeting

Preferably, the interview shall be carried face to face for a site meeting set up with a proper social distancing in considering the covid-19 pandemic situation. The site visits provide a greater understanding of how the case can be presented by the researcher and to ease the understanding by the respondents if any. The researcher should have made some valuable observations throughout the meeting on the following notes according to Yin, (2009):

- a. How organized and how smoothly things seem to run.
- b. What is the atmosphere like – especially if the researcher grabs the chance to continue speak to the respondent who maybe busy during the interview;
- c. The state of things such as any success reference or the people they would like to thank for being supportive to them.

However, due to the covid-19 pandemic, it has changed the world does things as some respondents may not be convenient or have the confident for a personal site meet up, as a result, a virtual meeting will be substituted when personal meet up is not available. However, both set of meetings shall still maintain a minimum interaction while the research objectives can be answered, and the targeted research aims can be achieved too.

These types of real-life observations would enable the data to be gathered in the most original social setting for that period of time and would allow the researcher to pose questions and enable him to gain more insightful about social networking that has impact to the respondents. In this method, the reactions of the respondents will be able to be observed and analysed seamlessly (Patton, 2002; Robson, 2002). This kind of direct interaction with the respondents enable greater understanding and avoiding any misinterpretation during the interview and thus the accuracy in data collection is relatively reliable than the conventional questionnaire method and this has been seen as the key advantage in maintaining such observation in a direct/face to face interview (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005).

3.6.2 Arranging Interviews

The primary source of data in this research will be generated from the interviews as a valuable insight (Yin, 2003). The interfacing of the interview is conducted via direct communication where the interviewer and interviewee have direct interaction. Face to face meeting helped the researcher to get a more effective response and the interview will be efficient. This two-way communication is versatile and flexible between the researcher and the respondents (Zikmund, 2003).

In the interview arrangement, the following points were useful to the researcher (Phondej, Kittisarn & Neck, 2011):

- a. One interview per day as meeting was conducted under a freestyle atmosphere even the meeting agenda was structured to allow the respondents to answer the questions relaxingly. A maximum period of each interview will not be more than 2 hours.

- b. A follow up meeting may be required if there is any interruption during the interview or any unexpected occasion.
- c. A set of standard questions will be sent to the respondents prior to the interview, this would allow enough time for the respondents to prepare the answer and compose them though in a thorough context so that the interview can be run more smoothly.
- d. An appointment schedule shall be fixed with the respondent's confirmation before the interview session and a reminder will be sent one day before the actual day of interview as a courtesy.

3.6.3 Conducting Interviews

The interview will be recorded and structured as per plan as much as possible. If the meetings were held online – due to the pandemic, all the recording data will be saved at the designated pc and will have another back up at cloud storage. If the meeting were held at the designated private meeting place, it will be recorded by a electronic recording equipment / handphone. When the researcher chose to take down any notes and points taken during the interview as the preferred method to be used in the interview in a structured English format, this is including any cognitive mapping, mind mapping or any other method which is make available to the researcher. A research diary was compiled as the important document in facilitating the recording of all relevant observations, apart from the video recording. When it was required, the research is able to submit the relevant electronic recording files, notes and research diaries as the evidence to the research committee if deem necessary to ensure its reliability and validity.

3.6.4 Verbatim

A verbatim transcription was used in this research, it refers to the word for word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication from the recording data (Poland, 1995). Besides, the transcription also consisted of the process in reproducing spoken words, such as those from the interview. In this study, the reason of chosen verbatim to produce an original of the data transcription from the interview because it was beneficial to qualitative inclined research like this. It is easier to code text than any other multimedia data, so a text version of qualitative interviews is easier to understand and more convenient for statistical and automated sentiment analysis. Corden and Sainsbury (2005) underpinned that researchers should explain their fundamental reasons for adapting verbatim quotations within the following notions: as the matter of enquiry approach, as evidence based research method, as explanation in dealing with all inquiries, as illustration to map out the mind setting, to deepen understanding of what should the research topics all about, to give respondents a voice in bi-laterally communication and last not the least to enhance readability and accessibility.

According to Dale (1993), the advantages of producing verbatim transcription are the availability of data will be readily for use whenever it is required, and such verbatim recordings of the interview is seemingly beneficial to facilitate further data analytics by the researcher in accessing the data and certainly to help the researcher to conclude a fruitful finding and recommendation from the past studies.

3.6.5 Data Analysis

Analysis technique is one of the most critical components in qualitative research. Bernard (2002) explained there are many ways and techniques to be used in qualitative

data analytics such as hermeneutic analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, cross-culture analysis, and content analysis. In this study, content analysis was chosen for the researcher in pursuing the qualitative data analysis. In this aspect, the researcher examined artifacts of social communication. In principle, it was recorded in the form of written documents or transcription of recorded verbal communication (Strauss, 1987). Holsti (1969) defined content analysis is a systematic technique for making hypothesis and objectively identifying special attributes of messages. Content analysis is a powerful empirical method for text analysing and a popular method that technical researchers can use on their studies (Thayer, Evans, McBride, Queen & Spyridakis, 2007).

Through content analysis, it has helped the researcher to expose any hidden connections with the respondents from the initial research topic to the exposure of further relationship that established in revealing more ideas that initially seem unconnected and uniformly getting involve with the decision-making processes associated with many others communication methods. The researcher sets a combination of content analysis factors including the research questions, the theoretical foundation of the study, and choosing the appropriateness of the technique for presenting the data analytics logically. According to Stake (1995), case study involves a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by analysis of the data in sorting out the finding based on the research's themes or issues. To achieve this, the researcher begins with a general sorting of cases into specified category or known as open-coding. In the context of a case study, content analysis is accomplished within the framework of open coding. According to Strauss (1987), it is often to observe that coding frames occur after open coding is completed and it is always coupled with intensive coding for one category. The coding frames are used to structure the data and discover findings after open coding has been concluded (Bernard, 1994). The first coding frame is normally involved with multilevel process that required several

successive examining of all relevant case study's contents. The next level of analysis involved making inferences, with the subsequent potential in developing models or even generating theory (Merriam, 1988). At first phase of analysis, the researcher needs to do more trials between the details, thus, a landscape view of conceptual model occurs, as examined by Miles and Huberman (1994).

The data from interviews were analyzed using the Atlas.ti 9 qualitative research software. This software assists the researcher in the process of analyzing qualitative data being collected through unstructured and semi-structured methods. This software also helping the researcher to upkeep the data closely, which allowing for further discovering more intense and others academic exploration in near future. The application of the Atlas.ti 9 consists of open-ended data, accounts, images, videos, audio files and even google earth images. It required the description on the items or break down of the case studies which is helped to understand respondents' point of views or their perceptions towards to the research study. It also required vary methods of data collection such as in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, notes taken from the interview, surveys (if any) with open ended questions and any other knowledge-based analysis.

Chua (2017) underlines the emphasizes of Atlas.ti software program is a qualitative inclined one rather than quantitative as the determination of the research elements comprises of primary data material for further interpretation of the research objectives. A greater emphasis would be knowledge management, which focuses the transformation of data into useful pool of knowledge.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical predicament exists when interviews, observations and surveys are used for data collection in a qualitative inclined research study (Merriam, 1988). The key to upkeep the professionalism and always stay integrity in the research study is to always maintain ethical manner to ensure the interest of respondent in the research study has been guarded. As referred to Gradwell (2004), the following protocols were in placed to protect all respondent's rights in considering most common protection factors and research objectives can be achieved concurrently:

- a. The research objectives were clearly defined in both verbal and written context.
- b. A written permission to proceed with the study prior interview, as articulated was received from the respondents.
- c. The respondents are expected and well informed on the methods in data collection and its methods in collecting data such as devices for recording and the research activities (or any method of its kind).
- d. A verbatim transcription and written interpretation reports were made available for the respondents to access at later stage in validating the readiness of the studies.
- e. The rights, interest and wishes of the respondent were considered as the researcher's primary concern when choices were made regarding to the reporting format. Lastly,
- f. If the respondent would like to make their participation as anonymous despite knowing the research has a minimal risk in exposing unnecessary information to be published and this decision will be finale.

3.8 Conclusions

The methodology in this study presents the research design, the population and sample, data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration. This chapter justifies the need for a qualitative case study to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The data analysis results are provided and analysed in this chapter in accordance with the goals and research questions. This chapter examines fifteen case studies, each carefully constructed to fulfil important study objectives, that were taken from interviews on entrepreneurial networking framework. The chapter also describes the results of the data analysis procedure. To gather data for this study, fifteen semi-structured online interviews with business professionals were conducted. The researcher oversaw the thematic coding and transcription of the gathered data to guarantee accuracy and consistency. This methodical procedure, which included transcribing, theme coding, and content analysis at the end, was crucial in simplifying the analysis and compressing long responses for quicker and more effective interpretation.

4.2 Response Rate

In this study, fifteen respondents agreed to be interviewed during a period from June 2022 to November 2023 with response rates at 100%. Exhibit 4.1 shows the summary of response rates in this study.

	Frequency (%)
Received consent to participate	15
Rate of response received	100%

Exhibit 4.1: Response Rate

4.3 Profile of Respondents

According to Exhibit 4.2, all the candidates are recognized as experts in their respective industries, actively engaging in social networking across various platforms and organizations. This makes them a credible and dependable source for gathering information pertinent to the research topic. Their involvement in networking activities underscores their relevance and reliability in providing valuable insights for the study.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	13	87.00
Female	2	13.00
Age:		
30-39 years old	6	40.00

40-49 years old	6	40.00
50-59 years old	3	20.00
Education:		
Degree Holder	9	60.00
Master Holder	6	40.00
Industry:		
Construction	3	20.00
Manufacturing of Furniture	3	20.00
Consumer Goods	2	13.35
Information Technology	1	6.65
Professional Services	4	26.70
Environmental Engineering	1	6.65
Food & Beverage	1	6.65
No. of Employee:		
1-20	7	46.60
21-50	1	6.70
51-100	1	6.70
101-300	6	40.00

Company Turnover/Revenue:		
RM 20-30 million	8	53.30
RM 31-50 million	5	33.40
RM 51-100 million	2	13.30
Years of Experience:	2	13.3
0-10	11	73.3
11-20	1	6.7
21-30	1	6.7
31-40		
Position: Director	15	100

Exhibit 4.2: Percentage and Frequency of Respondents' Profile

The survey data comprises responses from a total of fifteen respondents, with a predominant representation of males (87%) compared to females (13%). Age distribution among the respondents shows a good distribution in the region of, with some 40% falling in the 30-39 years old category, another 40% in the 40-49 years old category, and the remaining 20% in the 50-59 years old category.

On the other hand, educational qualifications of the respondents indicate a mix, with 60% holding bachelor's degrees and 40% holding master's degrees. The sampled respondents represent a diverse range of industries, including three respondents from

construction sector; three respondents from manufacturing of furniture segment; two respondents from consumer goods area; one respondent from information technology's field; four respondents from professional services industry; one respondent from environmental engineering division and one from food & beverage's nature of business.

Company size within the respondents' organizations varies, with seven respondents representing companies employing with 1-20 employees; one respondent from a company employing with 21-50 employees; one respondent from a company with employing with 51-100 employees, and six respondents from companies with employing 101-300 employees.

Revenue distribution reflects a concentration in region of RM 20-30 million, with a total of 8 respondents reporting turnovers within this bracket. Additionally, five respondents indicated turnovers between RM 31-50 million, while two respondents reported turnovers of RM 51-100 million. The sample size is well fitted to the targeted range as identified as SMEs in Malaysia.

Regarding professional experience, most respondents, which accounted eleven out of fifteen respondents, have accumulated 11-20 years of business experience. With two respondents have 0-10 years of experience, one has 21-30 years, and another one has 31-40 years of experience in their respective professions.

All fifteen respondents hold positions as directors within their organizations, highlighting a strategic focus on engaging with top-level / C-Suite decision-makers for

insights and perspectives in the surveyed companies aligned with the researcher's research questions. This detailed breakdown provides a comprehensive understanding of the demographic and organizational characteristics of the surveyed sample, which is crucial for academic analysis and interpretation.

4.4 Report Analysis Data using Atlas. ti Software

In this study, verbatim was used in order to produce the original of data transcription from the interviews. Data collected from the interview was analyzed qualitatively using Atlas.ti version 9.0.

The findings are reported according to the eight interview questions or its similar translation and interpretation as below:

1: What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?

2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?

3: How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help?

4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?

5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization?

6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?

7: What's the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications?

8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work?

To prevent any private and confidential information leaking and to protect the privacy of the fifteen research respondents in the study's sample, each respondent was assigned a numerical label from 1 to 15 (e.g., Verbatim P1, Verbatim P10, Verbatim P15 and etc.). This numerical label is used consistently throughout the presentation of the study's results and findings.

4.5.1 Co-relation of Interview Questions Matching with Research Objectives and Questions

The research objectives and questions are intricately designed to explore entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian entrepreneurs from SMEs through the lens of the McKinsey 7S Framework. This alignment ensures a comprehensive examination of how various organizational elements influence networking practices and, consequently bring impacts to SME performance. Below are the explanation with alignment and the logics behind how these interview questions are properly crafted (or in a similar verbal translation or interpretation) to achieve the results.

Research Objectives and Corresponding Research Questions:

1. To explore the current status and practices of entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs.

Research Question (RQ) 1: What is the current status of entrepreneurial networking among SMEs in Malaysia?

This objective and question aim to assess the existing networking activities within Malaysian SMEs, providing a fundamental understanding of their networking landscape and business phenomenon related to entrepreneurial activity.

2. To investigate the importance of entrepreneurial networking for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs.

Research Question (RQ) 2: Why is entrepreneurial networking important for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs?

This objective and question focus on identifying the benefits and significance of networking in strengthening SME growth and ensuring long-term goals can be achieved.

3. To examine how the elements of the McKinsey 7S Framework are applied in entrepreneurial networking and to identify the most critical elements influencing SME performance.

Research Question (RQ) 3: How are the elements of McKinsey's 7S Framework applied in entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs, and which elements are the most significant for fostering performance and innovation?

This objective and question investigate in-depth the application of the McKinsey 7S elements—Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Style, Staff, and Skills—in the context of entrepreneurial networking, aiming to determine which factors most significantly impact SME performance.

4.5.2 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions:

The alignment of interview questions with the research questions (RQs) and objectives guarantees thorough analysis of entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs, especially using the McKinsey 7S Framework. Following is a detailed academic analysis of how every interview question meets the corresponding RQs with the support from scholarly literatures:

Interview Question 1: What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?

Alignment with RQ1: The focus of the first question is on what value networking approaches create and what networking strategies are used, capturing SME participation in industry associations, government programs, and informal business functions (Zaefarian et al., 2017). The evolution of digital networking following COVID-19 has also enhanced market access and operational resilience (Khosravi et al., 2022).

Interview Question 2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?

Alignment with RQ3: The second question looks into the organizational structure that enables sustainable networking and underscores the need for formalized business networks, cluster-based models, and cross sector alliances for the survival of SMEs (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Poorly organized networking initiatives are known to waste resources (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Interview Question 3: How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help?

Alignment with RQ3: The systematic entrepreneurial networking model is examined in the third question, where participation, as well as passive networking, requires the use of digital tools such as LinkedIn, BNI Malaysia, business Chambers, facilitating greater visibility and collaboration among SMEs (Ratten, 2021).

Interview Question 4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?

Alignment with RQ3: The fourth question analyses the leadership styles as they pertain to networking, noting the supportive role of transformational leadership in engaging, envisioning, and building coalitions. Autocratic leadership is counterproductive to networking. On the other hand, participative leadership, which is prevalent in Malaysian SMEs, fosters industry clustering as well as joint venture projects (Mason & Brown, 2014; Rostamkalaei, 2017).

Interview Question 5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization? And,

Interview Question 6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?

Alignment with RQ3: The contributions of staff motivation and skill improvement towards the success of networking are treated in the fifth and sixth questions. Participation of employees in networking activities, as well as training on basic communication, negotiation, and relationship skills, helps enhance the competitiveness of SMEs (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Singh, 2022). It is also posited that networking contributes to and improves strategic thinking and emotional intelligence which is important in business relationship management and flexibility (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Baron & Markman, 2003).

Interview Question 7: What's the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications?

Alignment with RQ2: The seventh question focuses on the importance of networking in entrepreneurship, demonstrating how networking leads to increased sales, marketed product offerings, and partnership reinforcement that helps SMEs to outlast economic recessions (Granovetter, 2005; Stam, 2010). Networks serve as information sources for these SMEs by providing them with valuable data concerning the market, industry, and legislation (Coviello, 2006).

Interview Question 8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work?

Alignment with RQ3: Lastly, the eighth question looks into the implementation of an entrepreneurial networking model with the practical use of the McKinsey 7S Framework designed to strategically, structurally, and systematically enhance SME resilience and competitive edge (Waterman, Peters & Phillips, 1980). Malaysian SMEs that corporatize networking using mentorships, structured alliances, and other electronic networking interfaces tend to have more entrepreneurial successes and sustainability over time (Galkina & Jack, 2020).

By aligning the interview questions with the research questions and objectives, the study ensures a structured and coherent approach to data collection, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of how the McKinsey 7S elements influence entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs.

4.6 Introduction and Summary of Findings

This study examined networking practices of Malaysian SMEs with emphasis on social networking, organizational designs, leadership styles, employee motivation, transferability of skills, value creation, and sustainable business networking models. Analysis has shown the key themes of trust, value-driven strategies, systematic processes, leadership impacts, and industrial integration. BNI and other trade associations were reported to improve business sustainability, innovation, and responsiveness to the market.

Trust and relationship-building were singled out as critical success factors cross-industry collaboration, knowledge pooling, and long-term growth. Networking availability allowed SMEs to exploit existing markets, share resources, and deal with industry issues. Moreover, value-based networking was associated with increased innovation, business synergies, and enhanced sustainability.

The networks studied were found to fit McKinsey's 7S framework, which validates the claim that there are ways of structuring networking with business objectives and changes in industries. Adaptable leadership styles were noted to have great impact on entrepreneurial success, decision-making, and business continuity, thus highlighting the importance of different leadership styles.

The motivation of employees as well as the development of their skills were equally crucial to the success of the network. Communication, collaboration, and relationship management were some of the fundamental skills that enabled SMEs to evolve, develop, and be competitive which, along with the training and career development offered, were seen to drive engagement. The respondents pointed out the proactive role networking

played in resource acquisition, new venture creation, and monitoring and reinforced its influence on business creativity and sustainability.

The model focused on the Sustainable Business Networking integrated collaboration, shared values, continuous learning and digital transformation as the main building blocks for resilient business ecosystems. These emerged as new findings with the most relevance to adaptability in leadership, business models, and technological networking were essential for relevance in the market. The findings aided in the formation of a comprehensive entrepreneurial networking system for Malaysian SMEs intended to improve business performance, stimulate innovation and strengthen inter-industry relations. Exhibit 4.3 contains summary of research findings with all replied and comments from all of the respondents (consist with all unique thematic) and its in-depth discussion will be provided in the next section.

Summary of Findings at a Glance	7S Model + ENM	Hard Elements							Soft Elements										How it Works?				
		Strategy			Structure		System		Style				Staff			Skills		Shared Value			Entrepreneurial Networking Framework		
	Theme	Impacts of the Strategies Entrepreneurial Networking			Structure of a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking		Success factors of Entrepreneurial Networking Model		Organizational Leadership	Visionary Leadership	Effective Leadership	Teamwork & Communication	Motivational Factors for Business Networking			Transferable Skills Via Entrepreneurial Networking		Most Important Core Values in Entrepreneurial Networking			A Working Model/Framework		
Respondent Code	Sub-themes	Perception	Networking Availability	Value Strategies	Sustainable Networking	Sustainable Entrepreneurial Relationship	Network Goals	Communication Tools	Good Leader, Respectful, More Effective	Clear Vision, Implicit & Explicit, Key Role	Commitment, Behaviour	Clear Communication, Transparency	Training	Staff Satisfaction	Succession Planning	Communication Skills	Teamwork	Resources	Finding New Opportunities	Staying with Current Industry Trends	No One Size Fits All Model	Technologies Adoption	Change
p1		✓										✓						✓					
p2		✓							✓					✓		✓							
p3						✓	✓									✓							
p4			✓			✓							✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	
p5				✓		✓						✓	✓	✓									
p6			✓					✓	✓								✓			✓			
p7		✓				✓					✓			✓		✓							
p8						✓	✓		✓														✓
p9		✓				✓		✓			✓									✓			
p10									✓														
p11						✓						✓											
p12				✓								✓	✓										
p13												✓								✓			
p14								✓								✓							✓
p15						✓													✓				

Exhibit: 4.3: Summary of Research Findings

4.6.1 Interview Question 1 : What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?

This section discusses the findings of the research data in relation of the first research question: *What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?* There were three themes generated in this analysis in order to answer the research question. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with three themes emerging to include Perception, Networking Availability and Value Strategies.

4.6.1.1 Summary of Interview Question 1

The exact quotes highlight how important social connections and networks are when it comes to entrepreneurial networking. Verbatim 1 stresses the significance of building relationships, with both internal and external partners not only building trust within companies but also enhancing overall performance greatly. Similarly Verbatim 2 underscores the role of networks as key components of an entrepreneur's social capital providing pathways for growth and access to various opportunities.

Verbatim 7 depicts entrepreneurship as closely linked to ties emphasizing the interdependence that characterizes entrepreneurial pursuits. This underscores the importance of nurturing and fostering connections within the community. Verbatim 9 further explains that the quality of relationships within networks, including those among entrepreneurs, resources and opportunities is crucial in determining success.

Additionally, Verbatim 6 reminded that maintaining networking relationships requires effort and commitment. He warns against assuming that initial connections automatically lead to long term partnerships stressing the need, for nurturing and expanding these bonds. Meanwhile Verbatim 12 sheds light on the skills and expertise found within networks providing valuable insights and guidance that can greatly assist entrepreneurs navigating these networks. In general, direct quotes collectively emphasize the interconnected nature of networks.

The importance of connections and networking in boosting business expansion encouraging creativity and creating opportunities, for collaboration that can positively transform industries and communities is emphasized.

As a result, a thorough analysis of the interview answers related to this research query is presented in Exhibit 4.4.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Impacts of the Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception 	Percept	1, 2, 7 & 9
Entrepreneurial Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking Availability 	NetBility	4, 6

-
- Value Strategies Value 5 & 12
-

Exhibit 4.4: Summary of Research Question 1

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 4.1 below to show the connection between the impacts of strategies entrepreneurial networking within the context of this research question. More discussion will be made in the next section.

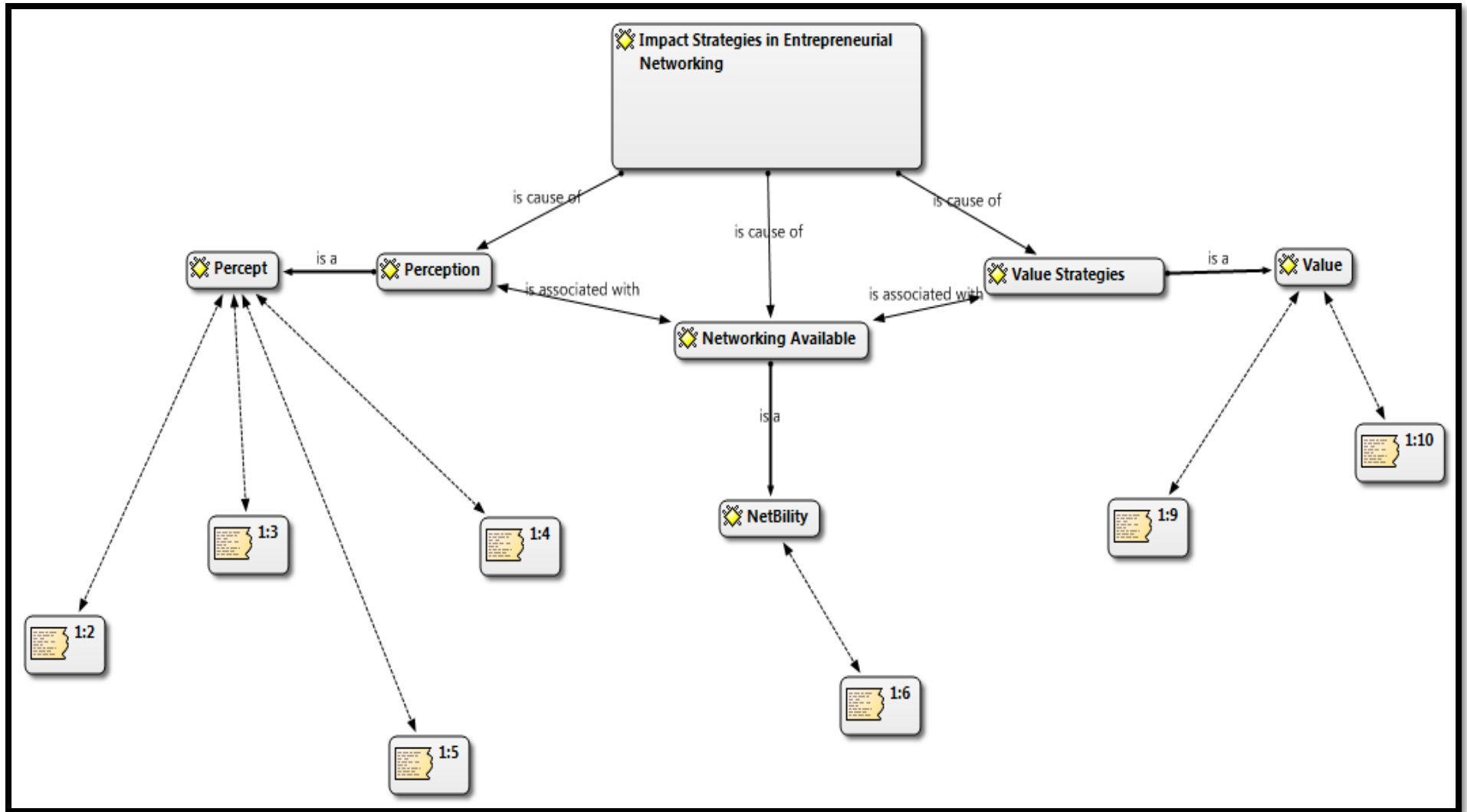


Figure 4.1: The Impacts of the Strategies Entrepreneurial Networking

4.6.1.2 Discussion of Findings 1

I. Perception

In the dissertation topic "Entrepreneurial Networking Framework For Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)" and after conducting an in-depth analysis and discussions on the existed and current literature review, entrepreneurial networking has a crucial impact on the performance and success of SMEs worldwide. These networks, whether formal or informal act as channels for SMEs to access resources, expertise and opportunities that are key to enhancing their competitive advantage and overall performance.

By building ties with internal stakeholders like employees, managers and owners as well as external partners, suppliers, customers and industry professionals, SMEs create an atmosphere of trust and collaboration within their companies. This promotes an environment, for sharing knowledge generating ideas and solving problems which leads to increased innovation, efficiency and operational effectiveness. Furthermore, the interconnections formed by SMEs through partnerships, networking events, industry associations, and joint projects significantly contribute to their ability to adapt to evolving market trends, allow entrepreneurs reassess traditional business strategies and to seize emerging opportunities timely.

This increased interconnection encourages the sharing of information gathering market intelligence and reaching markets and customer segments. These factors

are playing their roles in improving performance and ensuring growth for Malaysian SMEs. In essence, focusing on networking as outlined in McKinsey's model forms the basis of the research methodology for the dissertation. Through an examination of networking behaviours, strategies for building relationships and collaborative efforts among SMEs, the study aims to reveal insights into how these businesses utilize networking opportunities to enhance their performance to drive innovation and achieve lasting success, in competitive market environments.

In the research who responded accordingly, four respondents from fifteen targeted individuals, they have positive perception on network could be both formal and informal through which small businesses generate resources that are patent to their performance as listed below:

P 1: Verbatim 1.docx – 1:19 (62:62)

...business managers or owners establish social ties with both internal and external stakeholders, firm trust increases for better firm performance...

P 2: Verbatim 2.docx – 2:15 (22:22)

... social networks are an important part of an entrepreneur's social capital...

P 7: Verbatim 7.docx – 5:15 (52:62)

... In this perspective entrepreneurship is viewed as embedded in networks of continuing social relationships...

P 9: Verbatim 9.docx – 7:18 (21:32)

...within complex networks of relationship, entrepreneurship is facilitated or constrained by linkages between entrepreneurs, resources, and opportunities...

II. Networking Availability

In today's highly interconnected world having an effective business network is crucial, for entrepreneurs looking to tap into business prospects and gain values. The value of networking lies in its ability to help entrepreneurs easily connect with resources, information and markets without being limited by boundaries. This free flow of access empowers entrepreneurs to build relationships with clients, partners, investors and suppliers globally expanding their market presence and creating growth opportunities in business.

Networking opportunities provide entrepreneurs with the flexibility and accessibility to engage with their business community through marketing channels such as industry events, professional networks, online platforms, social media etc. These avenues allow entrepreneurs to establish connections while increasing visibility and leverage shared expertise with integral of resources for business growth.

Furthermore, networking opportunities go beyond borders and national boundaries enabling country to country interactions that help open international market with its diverse cultural perspectives and innovative business strategies. As a result, entrepreneurs can utilize these networks to reach more customer segments with greater exploration in seeking partnership possibilities and stay informed about emerging trends in the marketplace.

One respondent rightly pointed out that the availability of networking plays a crucial role in enhancing business outcomes. He emphasized that by utilizing networking opportunities entrepreneurs can access a wealth of resources, knowledge base and support systems that drive could innovation, foster growth and strengthen competitive positioning rather than struggle in business's survivorship.

Furthermore, connecting with others business associates creates an atmosphere that encourages sharing knowledge learning from each other and forming partnerships empowering business owners to make well informed choices and take advantage of new possibilities.

To sum up having access, to networking opportunities is a resource for entrepreneurs providing them with a doorway to a wider world of business marked by connections, cooperation and ongoing education. It is by engaging in

networking that entrepreneurs can navigate challenges establish enterprises and attain lasting success, in ever evolving and competitive markets.

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 20:48 (30:30)

...I think more often than not, the fear is present. Just that in some people is overcome by the desire for the return or the benefits of doing something new...

P 6: Verbatim 6.docx – 6:19 (62:62)

...networking isn't 'set it and forget it' making an initial connection doesn't guarantee a lasting relationship. If a connection is one you wish to maintain, dedicate time and effort to preserving and growing it...

III. Value Strategies

Entrepreneurial networking goes beyond simple connectivity; it acts as a collaborative platform where diverse entrepreneurs and perspectives converge to generate value. This collaborative potential within entrepreneurial networks often leads to the emergence of innovative ventures and unexpected business synergies, aligning perfectly with value creation strategies that fit the organizational goals. Many respondents have highlighted significant insights regarding the collaborative potential of networks.

While entrepreneurs utilize their networks to foster innovative ventures through collaboration and knowledge sharing within the network, they also identify new business opportunities, develop novel solutions to cope industry challenges, and pioneer disruptive innovations that could outshine their competitors. These factors drive market differentiation and competitive advantage in safeguarding a sustainable business.

On top of that, synergistic partnerships are another crucial outcome of networking. For example, entrepreneurs could have utilise the networks in establishing alliances with like-minded individuals, businesses, and organizations, through stronger collaboration in leveraging complementary strengths, resources, and expertise together. These partnerships result in compelling value propositions, enhanced product offerings, expanded market reach, and increased customer satisfaction are some success key factors.

Cross-sector collaboration in different trades can be facilitated by entrepreneurial networks, bringing together respondents from diverse industries and domains. This co-working collaboration stimulates creativity, encourages the exchange of ideas and best practices, and fosters interdisciplinary collaborations that drive innovation and value creation across sectors for those than are not.

Furthermore, networking also enables entrepreneurs to tap into larger innovation ecosystems, including stakeholders such as investors, business start-up accelerators, academic institutions, government agencies, and industry experts.

We can see active participation in these ecosystems provides access to valuable resources, mentorship, funding opportunities, and market insights, fuelling ecosystem-level innovation and contributing to sustainable growth while leveraging with network model.

Entrepreneurial networks thus serve as catalysts for value creation strategies by fostering close collaboration, technology innovation, and lead to synergistic partnerships. This collaborative environment drives business growth, resilience, and prosperity in competitive markets, henceforth, increase the nation's GDP and boost economic growth.

P 5: Verbatim 5.docx – 5:43 (13:15)

... by fostering connections and nurturing relationships within your network, you open the door to countless collaborative opportunities that have the potential to reshape industries and communities alike...

P 12: Verbatim 12.docx – 12:19 (92:92)

... within your network, you'll discover an array of talents: legal experts, marketing virtuosos, tech aficionados, and financial maestros, each ready to offer their unique insights and guidance....

4.6.1.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 1

FINDINGS 1 : What are the strategies in social networking and attain values?

This study highlights the importance of entrepreneurial networking as an innovation, sustainability, and success driver for Malaysian SMEs. Networking functions extends beyond its traditional peripheral approach to business to become a central strategy used by SMEs to acquire crucial resources, industry intelligence, market prospects, and even strategic alliances for competition in the market over time.

The findings reveal that trust and relationship-building are fundamental in networking success, and they facilitate interindustry collaboration, knowledge sharing, and business expansion. Opportunities for networking abound, but maintaining sustained active engagement is a challenge due to short term or opportunistic networking having little benefit. Clear objectives, regular attendance, and a structured approach are all essential for effective networking.

The study depicts networking as a value generator involving the cross-sector collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge flow that leads to innovation and sustainable growth. However, the impact of networking is directly proportional to the ability of entrepreneurs to optimize their networking contacts. In the absence of an explicit strategic plan, networking endeavours may not result in useful business consequences.

Despite the benefits, some problems still exist. Many SMEs do not have formal networking plans and tend to rely on personal contacts, therefore, limiting the potential for growth. Industry associations and government sponsored initiatives as more formalized networks would help improve sustainability. Also, the ability of entrepreneurs to harness network contacts to enhance business is limited, thereby justifying the need for entrepreneurial education on deliberate networking.

The move towards digital interactions is another important issue, as social media and other platforms are changing the way businesses relate with each other. In the case of SMEs, it is important to merge offline and online networking for greater opportunity expansion and access to foreign markets. Moreover, homogeneous networking, where SMEs only interact within their networks, is an obstacle to innovation. Including other industries, skills, and viewpoints creates diverse networks which can result in cross-disciplinary interactions and novel market ideas.

In the end, the research proposes a Sustainable Business Networking Model that combines systematized business networking, value-based leadership, digital networking, and ecosystem thinking for sustainability and resilience within the business system. A successful entrepreneur is one who appreciates the need to construct and consolidate business contacts, which is an active process that requires strategy and not passiveness to produce useful results.

Besides being an important facilitator of growth within SMEs, networking requires intentional action, constant activity, and flexibility to changes in the marketplace. For entrepreneurs, it is important to integrate networking into the wider business objectives rather than focus on immediate benefits. Purpose-based networking not only brings integrated networks but also encourages greater individual and organizational performance.

In conclusion, networking is much more than just connecting with individuals, it is about using those relationships to create value over time. If Malaysian SMEs embrace a systematic, innovation-focused, and value-collaborative approach to networking, then they will improve market position, achieve sustainable growth, and remain competitive in the everchanging world economy.

4.6.2 Interview Question 2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?

This section presents the research findings pertaining to the second research question: *What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?* The analysis encompassed two themes aimed at addressing this research inquiry, namely, perspectives on sustainable networking and structural factors influencing sustainable entrepreneurial relationships.

4.6.2.1 Summary of Interview Question 2

The direct quotes underscore strategies, for maintaining business connections and effective networking. A key idea is the role of trust in sustaining business relationships as emphasized by Verbatim 3. This trust applies to both clients and employees forming the foundation of lasting partnerships. Meanwhile, Verbatim 5 stresses the value of support encouraging individuals to be supportive during networking and to practice listening and show empathy.

Strategic networking, as recommended in Verbatim 4 involves setting networking goals and reaching out to a variety of stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, employees, investors, peers or competitors. This strategic approach is crucial for meeting sustainability goals and promoting collaboration across sectors. Verbatim 7 further emphasizes the importance of engagement and recognition in the sustainability journey underscoring the effort needed for sustainable practices.

Effective communication, as described in Verbatim 9 plays a vital role in networking success. Using communication channels like emails, newsletters, webinars, podcasts, blogs, social media platforms events or meetings enhances communication effectiveness. Enables information sharing, within networks. Lastly, Verbatim 11 highlights the importance of nurturing network relationships through listening, giving attention and following up on conversations (referrals).

To put forth accordingly, a detailed breakdown of the interview responses for this research question is provided in Exhibit 4.5.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Structure of a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View for a Sustainable Networking 	Sustain	4, 7, 9 & 11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Entrepreneurial relationship - Structure Factor 	Relation	3, 5, 8 & 15

Exhibit 4.5: Summary of Research Question 2

Establishing trust, loyalty and collaboration are among all important factors, in nurturing business relationships leading to sustained success and adaptability, over time. The key discoveries are outlined in Figure 5.2 illustrating the linkages among entrepreneurial networks in the context of this specific research query. More discussion will be made in the next section.

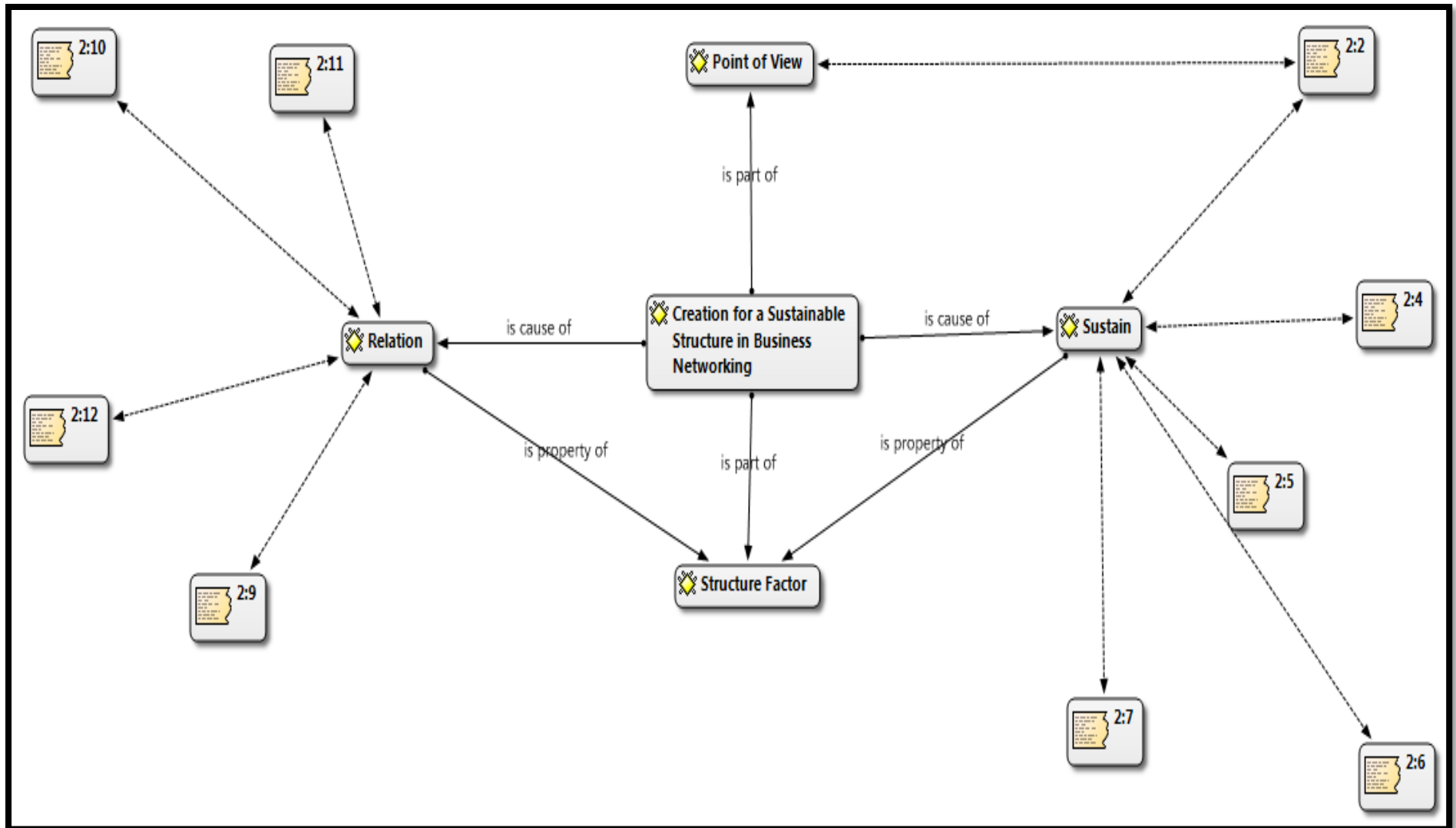


Figure 4.2: The Structure of a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking

4.6.2.2 Discussion of Findings 2

In today's business landscape, integrating sustainability into corporate strategies is essential for creating long-term business value and enhancing overall business performance, henceforth generate higher profitability. This involves aligning business activities with the needs of the enterprise and its involvement with key stakeholders, encompassing social, environmental, and economic considerations. In the modern perspective, the key stakeholders or in the modern-term known as C-suites executives play a crucial role in driving sustainability initiatives within organizations, balancing the objectives of improving social, environmental, and economic value with ensuring financial performance as their core KPIs.

Incorporating sustainability into core business areas presents a complex challenge that requires a high-level strategic approach. Establishing a sustainability network can be pivotal in influencing both top management and operational levels within an organization. This network acts as a channel for representing and disseminating sustainability-related insights and initiatives across all organizational tiers and bring impacts to all divisional businesses.

The primary objective of establishing a sustainability network is to enhance understanding of sustainability concepts and transform them into actionable strategies from economic, environmental, and social perspectives. This holistic approach aims to align sustainability goals with organizational objectives, driving sustainable practices and creating value across multiple dimensions that could possibly generate higher profitability.

Moreover, the network aimed to reach a collaborative solution for all business units, as well as to gain a clearer understanding of the work within the different business units disregarding of their own unique agendas represent their own's business structure .

I. Perspective on Sustainable Networking

In this section, four respondents identify the criteria for a sustainable structure in business networking, as listed below:

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 4:12 (50:50)

... **Identify your network goals** - need to have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish with your sustainability network. Depending on your network goals, you will need to target different types of people and organizations, such as customers, suppliers, employees, investors, peers or competitors...

P 7: Verbatim 7.docx – 7:21 (84:84)

...from my perspective, the sustainability journey is a collective effort that thrives on consistent engagement and recognition.....

P 9: Verbatim 9.docx – 19:56 (83:83)

...use different communication channels and formats, such as emails, newsletters, webinars, podcasts, blogs, social media, events, or meetings...

P 11: Verbatim 11.docx – 4:9 (101:101)

...nurturing your network relationships is essential for building trust, loyalty and collaboration.....

II. Sustainable Entrepreneurial Relationship

In this section, each respondent has identified the important points to maintain sustainable entrepreneurial relation, as listed below:

P 3: Verbatim 3.docx – 3:17 (119:8119)

...gaining trust is the most important thing to maintaining sustainable business relationships with our clients and employees....

P 5: Verbatim 5.docx – 5:10 (77:77)

... support each other – be there for your partner when they need you. Listen to them, lean on them, and help them through tough times...

P 8: Verbatim 8.docx – 8:19 (72:73)

... Like other relationships, you want to be thoughtful about just who you enter into sustainable relationships with. Given that we all have limits to our available time and mental energy, it's important to invest yours in the people who are best for you...

P 15: Verbatim 15.docx – 15:19 (82:82)

... any strong relationship, listening is fundamental. Give your partner your full attention — no email writing or notification checking. It is also effective to make a few notes after your conversations to follow-up on later....

4.6.2.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 2

FINDINGS 2: What is the anticipated structure of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization?

This study underscores the most relevant elements for maintaining an entrepreneurial networking organization: strategic participation, trust, communication and relationship upkeep. The results show that two aspects are particularly important: perceptions of sustainable networking and the context of entrepreneurial network relations. Both are vital for the construction of effective and enduring business networks.

Achieving long-term sustainability requires a proactive posture towards networking. A large number of SMEs participate in networking activities without any clear objectives, which makes their participation passive. The study proposes

that entrepreneurs should have proactive networking plans that assist in achieving business objectives, specify stakeholder participation, and embed sustainability. Entrepreneurial courses at universities should prepare SMEs to strategically leverage their networks to enhance business opportunities.

One of the most important features of sustainable entrepreneurial network is trust. Respondents spoke about the role of reputation and interpersonal trust in building relationships of trust. While networking is seen as a resource, trust is a prerequisite, and it can only be built through interaction, openness, and engagement. There are many entrepreneurs who have difficulty making contacts because networking is perceived as an operation with immediate benefits. Business cultures and ethics of different sectors may also obstruct trust building. There is a need for adaptation and cross sector entrepreneurial collaboration; otherwise, trust cannot be developed.

Adequate communication is essential for the proper maintenance of business networks. In particular, the study analyzed the absence of well-defined communication plans within SMEs that resulted in low brand engagement and poor information circulation. The disintegration of networks can be attributed to poorly structured communications, lack of defined targets, and moving target messaging. To counter these problems, networks require the adoption of modern digital integration tools like Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, AI-powered engagement platforms, and automated information dissemination systems for better network relations, interaction, and general engagement.

As much as the study emphasized the most important factors for sustainable networking, it also noted a number of barriers and deficiencies that must be resolved:

- 1. Lack of formal governance arrangements:** A number of entrepreneurial networks function at the informal level. There is no recognized leader to whom responsibility and accountability is allocated or conflicts resolution mechanisms. Adding governance structures that include leadership committees and performance assessment would allow for better visibility and sustainability.
- 2. Reduced engagement:** Over time, the interest of many entrepreneurs wanes, resulting in decreased activity in the networks. To increase retention, incentive-based engagement strategies like tiered participation and recognition awards could sustain users' active involvement.
- 3. Satisfying individual versus group interests:** Most entrepreneurs tend to favor their own individual business objectives as opposed to the networking value of the partnership. Networks need to ensure that there is enough reciprocal and objective focused interdependence for collective achievement.

The face-to-face meeting still plays an important role in business relationships. However, networking, AI business matchmaking, and digital analytics can greatly enhance access and efficiency.

A cross-sector and intercontinental collaboration of businesses encourages these activities: Within industries, some networks are quite deep, but cross-discipline and global inter-business and interdisciplinary networking is very weak. Such networks should be extended beyond the scope of certain industries because they help in opening up new unexplored markets, inviting foreign investments, and promoting creativity.

Implementing and sustaining trust reflects extending partnerships within entrepreneur networks. As underlying factors, respondents explained that trust develops over time based on engagement, candidness, and events shared in common. Many entrepreneurs are slow to trust, qualifying them based on reliability of prior engagements and business dealings. Trust plays a fundamental part in joint ventures and strategic alliances and tends to affect the longer-term business networks.

Networking is more than just attending events; it is about getting actively involved in business alignment activities on a regular basis. From the perspective of the study, networking is an asset: it calls for resource devotion, as well as time and effort. Networking institutions like Business Networking International (BNI)

are examples of purposeful participation as they guarantee active participation of members who need to be in a mutually beneficial relationship.

In addition, empathy and collaboration emerged as critical skills necessary for effective networking. Participants highlighted the importance for an entrepreneur to integrate all levels of the supply chain, including competitors, colleagues, and industry players. This allows for enhanced peer-to-peer interaction, knowledge exchange, and inter-organizational collaboration, resulting in more effective networks.

The study put emphasis on the leadership dimension as it pertains to sustainable networking. Such organizations within a network that seek to identify and nurture leaders tend to have greater participation and success over time. Networks where members are encouraged to assume leadership positions tend to be cohesive and highly motivated, leading to greater entrepreneurial activity.

Networking is now transformed by the digital shift, which makes online communications and digital platforms crucial for interaction, resource sharing, scheduling meetings, and events. It is important for entrepreneurs to use technology to broaden networking prospects while guaranteeing ease of use, efficiency, and sustainability of the business for years to come.

With this research, we assert that entrepreneurial networking is no longer confined to being a mere supportive activity, but rather, a core function for the

operation of SMEs. Profound changes will be seen with the implementation of effective networking that employs multifaceted approaches in facilitating access to the market, building confidence, fostering creativity, and supporting sustainability for the long term. Networking is, however, one of those functions that require strategic approaches – it cannot be left to ad hoc measures or passive involvement.

SMEs which strategize their digital transformation, integrate networking into their business model, and developed leadership within their networks stand a greater chance of achieving growth, resilience, and international competitiveness. By enhancing trust-based collaborations and communication strategies, and engaging in cross-sector collaboration, Malaysian SMEs can enhance their business networks and achieve sustained economic growth.

4.6.3 Interview Question 3: How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help?

This section discusses the findings of the research data in relation of the third research question: *How would a systematic approach of entrepreneurial networking model help?* There were two themes – the network goals and its communication tools for networks involved in this analysis to answer the research question.

4.6.3.1 Summary of Interview Question 3

The verbatim quotes from various respondents provide valuable insights into key aspects of organizational management and leadership within the context of entrepreneurial networking framework for SMEs in Malaysia:

One respondent, as reflected in Verbatim 3, positively acknowledges JMBA's structured and organized approach, signaling approval of the organization's management practices and operational efficiency, which are crucial for navigating the complexities of entrepreneurial networking.

In Verbatim 8, another respondent underscores the strategic significance of forging strong ties with government authorities and professional bodies like PAM, CIDB, and IEM. This underscores the strategic value of networking with external stakeholders to enhance organizational relationships and leverage collaborative opportunities, vital for SMEs aiming to expand their network and market presence.

Verbatim 9 sheds light on commendable leadership attributes demonstrated by key personnel within the organization, particularly in goal setting and driving the organizational agenda. This underscores the critical role of effective leadership in steering organizational progress and achieving organization's objectives which is aligning with the entrepreneurial networking model.

Furthermore, Verbatim 14 highlights the transformative impact of exemplary leadership behaviour in motivating his employees to prioritize collective organizational interests over individual pursuits. This would, in turn, fosters a sense of unity and collective commitment which is also essential for SMEs in navigating the challenges of entrepreneurial networking in a competitive market like Malaysia.

Lastly, Verbatim 6 advises as a cautionary reminder about the consequences of inconsistencies between organizational values and actions. It underscores the importance of alignment between words and deeds, emphasizing that a lack of coherence can hinder successful organizational change efforts and disrupt the organization's progress for better a prospect in entrepreneurial networking endeavours.

Accordingly, a detailed breakdown of the interview responses for this research question is provided in Exhibit 4.6.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Network 		
	Goals	NetGoal	3, 8 & 9

Success factors of entrepreneurial networking model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicati on Tools for the Network 	ComTo	6 & 14
---	--	-------	--------

Exhibit 4.6: Summary of Research Question 3

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 4.3 below to show the connection between the success factors of entrepreneurial networking within the context of this particular research question. More discussion will be made in the next section.

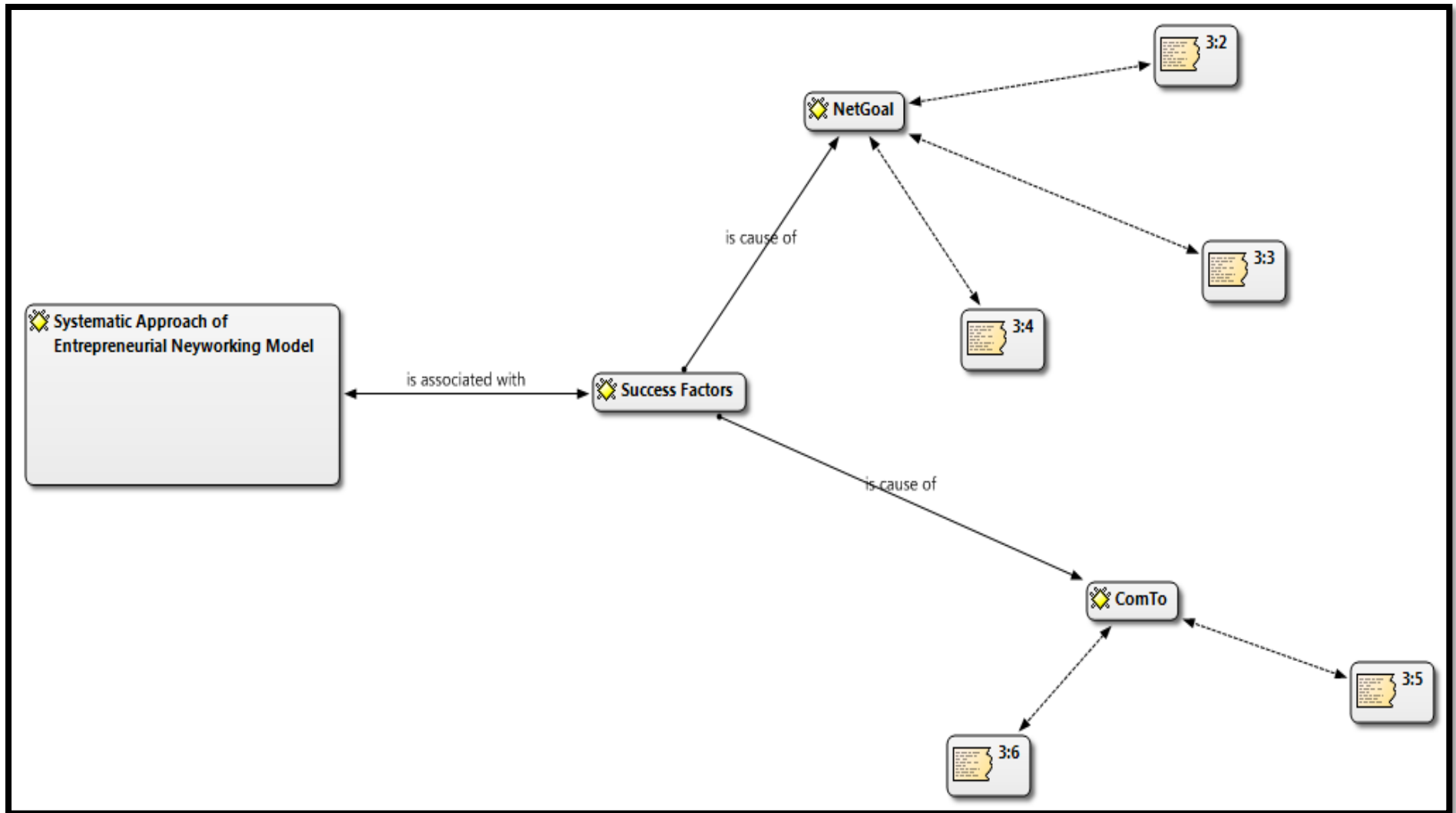


Figure 4.3: Success Factors of Entrepreneurial Networking Model

4.6.3.2 Discussion of Findings 3

I. The Network Goals

Establishing networking objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (as known as SMART) is instrumental in delineating the network organization's purpose and trajectory. This approach aids in concentrating network organization endeavours and resources while monitoring progress and outcomes. By setting a clear mission and vision, networking goals facilitate the identification of common objectives, their significance, action prioritization, time and energy allocation, performance monitoring, impact measurement, and celebration of accomplishments. Three respondents provided their perspectives on this matter, as outlined below.

P 3: Verbatim 3.docx – 1:21 (74:74)

... Yes. JMBA is quite organized and structured. ...

P 8: Verbatim 8.docx – 2:43 (97:97)

...Develop more connection with the government authorities and professional bodies. Linking with PAM, CIDB, IEM and etc...

P 9: Verbatim 9.docx – 3:14 (97:97)

... our leaders are good as well as others key member in setting the target ...

II. Communication Tools for the Network

Effective communication is essential in any network organization, particularly when managing intricate, dynamic, and frequently distant systems. It is crucial for sharing information, addressing issues, organizing tasks, and collaborating efficiently with colleagues and clients. However, determining the most suitable communication tools for a network team requires careful consideration of various factors. Some examples of popular tools that can enhance communication include video conferencing platforms, project management software, messaging apps, and collaborative document sharing platforms. Additionally, two respondents emphasized the significance of early communication and involving staff in managing anxiety during transition periods. This proactive approach fosters smoother transitions and promotes a positive work environment.

P 6: Verbatim 6.docx – 2:10 (79:79)

...Not walking the talk and doing it the right way, creates ripple effects in the organizations that would hinder successful organizational change...

P 14: Verbatim 14.docx – 1:13 (90:90)

... The right leadership behavior inspires employees to exceed their individual interests for the good of the organization as a whole....

4.6.3.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 3

FINDINGS 3: How would a systematic approach to the entrepreneurial networking model help?

This research underscores good and systematic planning and execution of networking activities among entrepreneurs in Malaysian SMEs as critical. SME managers must avoid considering networking as an auxiliary activity and instead integrate it with business growth, innovation, and sustainability. Objective-setting, in this case, is fundamental since a systematic **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) approach ensures that networking activities meet business goals like market penetration, resource in-take, and sales enhancement. But the study noted that a number of SMEs operate without particular objectives tied to networking leading to low-value relationships. Entrepreneurial networking training and frameworks need to include goal-setting such that network involvement is more thought-out and directed at business growth.

The one major inadequacy that stood out was the allocation of resources for planning communication. Communication emerged as another crucial determinant of networking success. Digital tools, project management systems, and even video conferencing platforms were highlighted as critical components to facilitate the flow of information. Communication practices within many SMEs appear to be ad hoc, which results in the gap between expectations and reality, low collaboration, and network disaffiliation. Poor communication practices ultimately weaken relationships and focus so much on networking that there is little to no progress. Addressing this issue requires the modeling of networks that

incorporate digital communication strategies like newsletters, scheduled networking activities, and task-oriented mobilization by managers. There is also an opportunity to foster greater participation and sustainability through the use of AI-powered engagement platforms combined with automated networking analytics so that SMEs can strategically plan their networking activities to achieve success over time.

Respondents pinpointed a powerful and effective leadership as a catalyst of trust, loyalty, and commitment within business networks. A leader inspires energetic engagement as well as loyalty which ensures effective benevolence towards sustainable networks. While the effective leadership styles unveiled in the findings enabled participation, collaboration and mentorship, a gap between promises made by leaders and the behaviors depicted was revealed in the study as a major concern. This gap often resulted in disenchantment and loss of commitment to the networks. To this end, networking models need to find ways of ensuring leaders are made accountable for their commitments by devising succession plans and incorporating performance evaluation systems to guarantee that leaders of networks deliver on their organizational promises.

The most notable drawback that was identified in the study is the absence of defined measurement systems for impact of structured networking which hinders entrepreneurial networks from realizing their optimal potential. Many networking organizations simply do not have clearly defined impact measurement systems and therefore lie dormant in the domain of business development. Further research should target the development of objective criteria such as retention,

business referrals, and Return of Investment (ROI) on networking as metrics to evaluate the productivity of networking endeavors. Moreover, although structured networking sets the framework, a high degree of inflexibility may also impede the spontaneous generation of social ties. It is imperative for entrepreneurial networks to avoid the excess of goal driven contact and aim for more meaningful cooperative action to achieve their goals.

The study also highlights another concern, which is the failure to make use of digital networking options. While technology can improve the scope and effectiveness of networking for many SMEs, a majority do not utilize AI-based networking, virtual meetups, and automated engagement tools. For future networking structures, there is a need to shift the paradigm to digital transformation in order to enhance connectivity and operational effectiveness. Moreover, maintaining a sustained level of participation over time within networking organizations poses a challenge since active entrepreneurs tend to lose interest over time. To solve this problem, networks need to add engagement strategies based on incentives such as membership levels, gamified participation, and exclusive rewards to ensure sustained commitment over time.

The analysis accentuates the role of effective leadership and organizational structure in the sustainability of entrepreneurial networks. Respondents pointed to the success of BNI, JMBA, and JBCCCI, which are organized in a functional manner and have effective integration of leadership, governance, and strategic objectives. These organizations have placed leadership together with the mission, thus ensuring that networking activities are conducted for a valid purpose and

value. On the contrary, the gaps between the espoused values and the actual practices may lead to distrust; thus, it becomes imperative that entrepreneurial networks develop strong succession plans, maintain cultural continuity, and ensure that there is a high degree of leadership responsibilities. Through consistency and transparency, networking organizations can enhance their credibility and influence SMEs.

In sum, this study validates that entrepreneurial networking is one of the most important tools for business growth, innovation, and sustainability over time. Its accomplishment, however, hinges on robust goal setting, communication, accountability, and technologization. With the adoption of proactive and well-defined networking, Malaysian SMEs stand to improve their market positioning, innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage. Further studies need to identify the criteria for performance assessment, intercultural networking methodologies, and transformation to digital networking for the purpose of perfecting entrepreneurial networking models to better assist SMEs in attaining lasting resilience and success.

4.6.4 Interview Question 4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?

This section discusses the findings of the research data in relation of the fourth research question: *Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?* There were four themes involved in this analysis to answer the research question, namely organizational leadership, visionary leadership, effective leadership and teamwork and communication.

4.6.4.1 Summary of Interview Question 4

The verbatim statements collectively underscore the pivotal role of leadership in achieving organizational success and navigating change effectively:

While Verbatim 2 stresses the leadership needed to reach business goals, ensure organizational sustainability and foster growth by efficiently allocating resources, aligning efforts, and motivating teams. And Verbatim 6 underscores the significance of leadership in handling change, emphasizing the leader's ability as a change agent to guide the organization towards prosperity.

Moreover, Verbatim 8 and Verbatim 10 emphasize the importance of leadership in addressing change, identifying optimal structures for organizations, and creating strategies to meet these goals efficiently. Furthermore, Verbatim 7, 9, and 13 highlight the role of organization's vision in leading efforts to take charge for organizational change with the alignment of collective actions and inspiring commitment to reach common shared objectives.

In addition, Verbatim 11 discusses utilizing technologies to enhance organization effectiveness, while Verbatim 1, 5, and 12 focus on key leadership skills like change management through effective communication, a more transparent channel, teamwork facilitation, and visionary's communication to empower employees and steer organizational success. Organizational transformation or change is a key

success element for SMEs looking forward to effectively emulate entrepreneurial networking.

This process does not just help SMEs adjust to changing market trends, technological progress and economic shifts but also positions them to gain a competitive advantage, in the Malaysian's dynamic business context. The resultant of embracing change allows SMEs to improve their performance which encourages innovation and establish a structured model in achieving success sustainably.

More importantly, effective leadership is crucial in the realm of networking among SMEs. Leaders are responsible for guiding the organization through transitions promoting a culture of teamwork and creativity that is aligning with the workforce achieving goals. They need to have foresight to predict market changes while seizing emerging opportunities and build a closer connection in both within and outside the company.

Moreover, driving change in SMEs requires proactive and adaptable leadership. Strategic leaders should excel at designing and implementing change strategies which is require communicating effectively with stakeholders and creating an atmosphere that fosters engagement and idea generation. This approach does not just facilitate organizational transformations but also boosts the overall resilience and flexibility of Malaysian SMEs' business landscape.

In summary, effective leadership and organizational change are key elements in shaping business networking, in the Malaysian context. Those who are embracing change would nurture a culture of collaboration and harnessing leadership skills are some tactics for SMEs aiming to succeed and innovate in the competitive market which eventually enable them to compete regionally and beyond.

Exhibit 4.7 offers an analysis of the interview responses related to this research query.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Organization Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Leader • Respect • More Effective 	OrgLeader	2, 6, 8 & 10
Visionary Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Vision • Implicit & Explicit • Key Role 	VisLeader	7 & 9
Effective Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment • Behavior 	EffectLead	11 & 13
Teamwork and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Communication • Transparency 	Team&Com	1, 5 & 12

Exhibit 4.7: Summary of Research Question 4

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 5.4 below to show the connection between the leadership styles within the context of this particular research question. More discussion will be made in the next section.

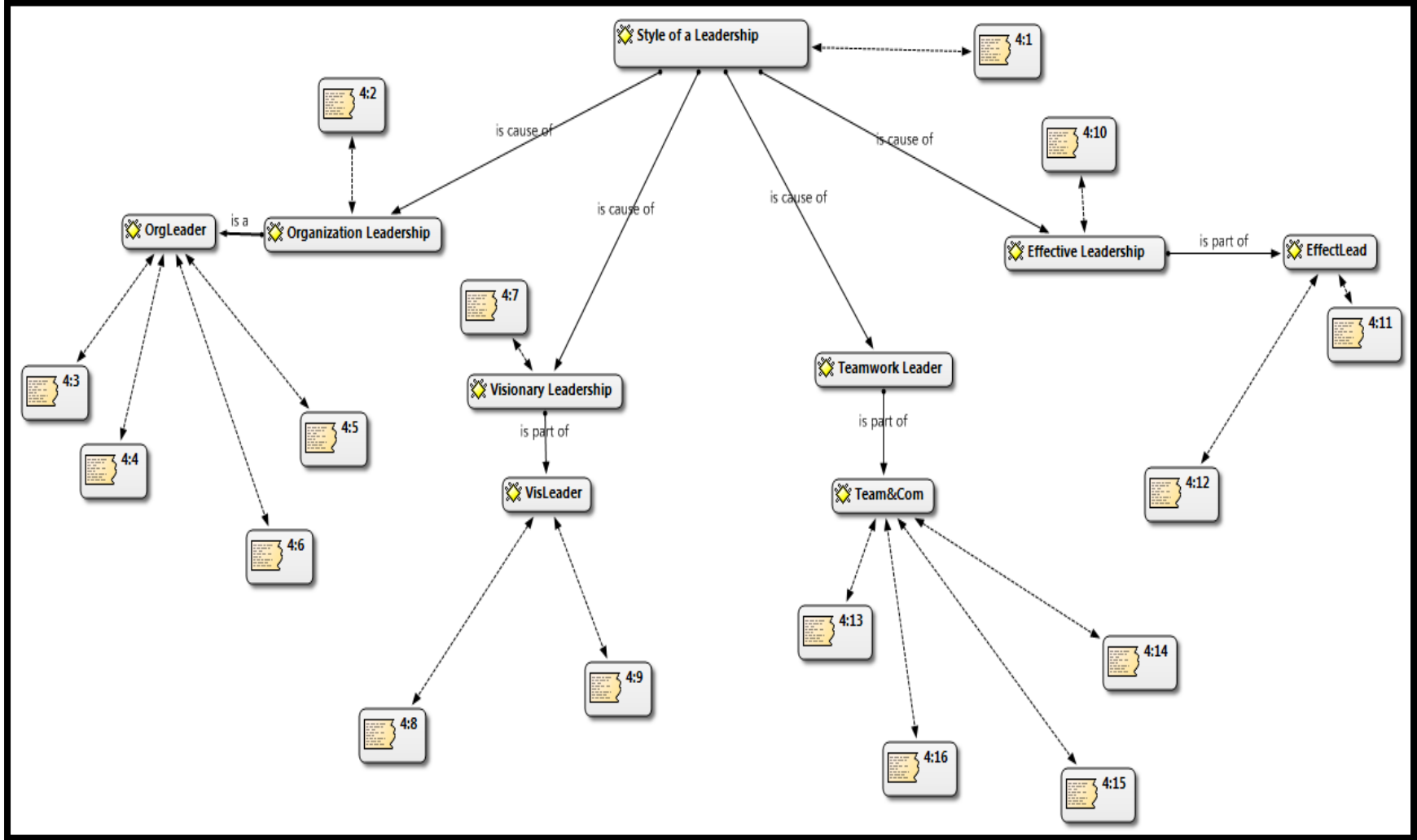


Figure 4.4: The type of leadership is preferred in networking

4.6.4.2 Discussion of Findings 4

I. The Organizational Leadership

The essence of leadership goes beyond being a quality possessed by a few individuals; rather it involves a strategic approach, to management. It entails recognizing the needs of employees aligning them with the goals of the organization and establishing an atmosphere that promotes effort towards company's objectives. This viewpoint sees leadership as more than instructions from ups but highlights the managerial role in cultivating teamwork and creativity within the organization.

In this light four respondents stress the significance of leadership in facilitating change. They emphasize how effective leadership can drive transformations during periods of change coordinate stakeholders actions and guide the organization towards meeting its goals. This perspective underscores the nature of leadership in shaping values encouraging employee involvement and spearheading initiatives, for enhancing performance.

P 2: Verbatim 2.docx – 1:21 (74:74)

...As the business goals can't be achieved without adopting any strategic business process, likewise the organizational success and sustainability also can't be accomplished without a strategic role of leaders. From allocation of resources to alignment, from perception of thing to decide future focusing, form commitment and motivating the teams to get the

goals of an organization, to confirm the sustainable growth, it's a **leadership** whose footprints are everywhere.....

P 6: Verbatim 6.docx – 3:9 (83:83)

... The leader as a person in charge or as a change agent can manage an organization or the process of organizational change **more effectively** and successfully if h/she is capable and competent....

P 8: Verbatim 8.docx – 4:9 (101:101)

... As **leadership has a central role** in evolution and cultivating an organization, the process of organizational change demands a very effective and highly competent leadership that is well capable to perceive the most desirable shape of an organization and address the issue of organizational change in most appropriate way....

P 10: Verbatim 10.docx – 6:6 (80:80)

...While discussing the **leadership competencies**, admit that organizational change is a process in which a most desirable and suitable future form of an organization is perceived and route map is decided to get this new shape....

II. Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership entails guiding organizations and their teams towards a defined organization's mission and vision. Without a clear direction or purpose, leadership loses its significance by charging the organization. Therefore, it is imperative for leaders to possess a well-defined vision. The concept of vision encompasses diverse perspectives and angles, each shedding light on the overarching goals and aspirations of the organization and make this possible and achievable.

In this section, each respondent has identified the important clear vision that contributes to the development of new objective, as listed below:

P 7: Verbatim 7.docx – 3:10 (77:77)

...Vision is a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future... an ideal and unique image of future for the common good...

P 9: Verbatim 9.docx – 3:10 (77:77)

... Vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people. Without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible and time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all...

III. Effective Leadership

Effective leadership, on the other hand is characterized by the ability of an individual to influence or change the values, beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes of others within an organization. A leader who demonstrates strong leadership skills serves as a role model for their employees, garnering trust and admiration through their successful achievements. This trust and admiration often lead to employees emulating the leader's values, beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes, as imitation is seen as a form of flattery.

Strong leadership extends beyond personal influence; it empowers leaders to motivate others towards achieving the organization's goals and objectives. Moreover, effective leaders excel in providing clear direction to their employees, fostering commitment and teamwork to accomplish the organization's mission. This clarity of vision enables leaders to identify and address challenges and obstacles that may impede progress towards organizational aims.

Two respondents clearly stated that leaders possess the capability to implement necessary reforms effectively and efficiently, steering the company towards the future while staying updated with modern developments in the business environment.

P 11: Verbatim 11.docx – 11:10 (77:77)

... utilize digital technologies during pandemic and even after...also using new technologies such as drone and high spec pc to generate more results efficient to assist in the works...

P 13: Verbatim 13.docx – 13:10 (77:77)

... tackle younger generation and to share the company's vision and mission...

IV. Teamwork and Communication

Leaders must not just improve their leadership skills. Create an environment of creativity and teamwork, among their employees. Working together and communicating effectively are crucial for coming up with innovative ideas that can benefit the organization. To build the kind of teamwork and fellowship needed for innovation leaders should establish a work culture where employees trust each other feel empowered to do their jobs without micromanagement and are encouraged to communicate. Leaders who want to bring about change in the organization should encourage collaboration and open communication among employees. This allows individuals to think outside the box and leads to outcomes. It also gives people a chance to learn from each other helping them identify areas for growth and development including top management learning from their team members.

Communication is key in promoting understanding among individuals and fostering innovation through sharing ideas. It also plays a role, in building trust among employees and creating unity within the organization. Leadership, within its broad spectrum, goes beyond influencing employees, and also plays a crucial role in providing guidance aligned with the organization's vision and mission. Effective leaders develop strategies to support employees in attaining the company's goals and objectives. Three respondents underscored the significance of these aspects, as outlined below:

P 1: Verbatim 1.docx – 4:13 (125:125)

... Certain leadership skills that we found to be important for different parts of the organization are the ability to lead change, **communicate effectively**, come to the top, as well as foster **teamwork**, and build plans and those kinds of things...

P 5: Verbatim 5.docx – 4:13 (125:125)

...**communication and transparency** whereby that what happened to the company, the bottom-line, this information must be shared...

P 12: Verbatim 12.docx – 4:16 (15:15)

... **Communicate** their visions to promote changes and widen support of the visions...Empower their people to act consistently with the new vision and help sustain commitment to it...In order to get their maximum work

output and let them work confidently for achieving the organizational goals....

4.6.4.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 4

FINDINGS 4: Why is a particular style of leadership important in business networking for entrepreneurs?

This analysis illustrates the importance of leadership on entrepreneurial networking within Malaysian SMEs. Good leadership has a broad range of application which goes beyond simply managing an organization to include collaboration, innovation, and sustaining business over a long duration. This study shows the impact of leadership on entrepreneurial networking through organizational leadership, visionary leadership, leadership in the digital world, and team communication in an organization.

Results indicate that organizational leadership is a fundamental source of change as it transforms the internal and external market structures. Leaders cannot remain passive; they must put their firms in a position to capitalize on changing business conditions. This is consistent with Kotter (1996)'s Change Model that highlights the importance of developing a sense of urgency, building guiding coalitions, and developing and implementing change for successful outcomes. However, a major problem is the absence of organized leadership training programs, which means that most of the SME leaders are strategically and stakeholder managed. This gap needs to be filled through purposeful leadership

training in networking organizations so that leaders can tackle complex business problems.

Visionary leadership emerged as a key element in effective networking. Respondents stressed the importance of strategic goal setting and cross-organizational alignment. Transformational leadership theories argue that vision and stakeholder engagement mobilizes action, but many entrepreneurial networks do not have formal visions. Organizations face a disconnect between strategy and execution when there is no clear intent communicated to the members. New networks should add vision-setting steps for clarity and coherence in entrepreneurial networks.

The research also focuses on the increasing necessity of leadership flexibility in a digitized context. The AI-based networking, automation, and business technologies, in particular, digital transformation, are important in enhancing productivity. The problem is that many leaders of SMEs are still reluctant or do not have the necessary skills to use new technologies. This gap hampers effective networking in the context of globalization. For greater digital leadership, future efforts should focus on shifting leaders of SMEs towards digital transformation, using AI and data-driven decision making to strengthen business relationships.

In addition, employers actively seek networks and clusters as the means to increase social interactions within and around the organization. The results indicate that effective leaders build confidence, facilitate trust, and enhance

communication and teamwork among staff. With trust, there is effective and smooth company communication. Still, many members are left feeling sceptical and apathetic due to a gap within networked organizations between what the leaders say they accomplish and what they actually do. In order to address the problem, networking systems should work with defined communication plans, systems for decision making, and evaluation frameworks for leader's performance.

Though there is a compelling argument for leadership in networking, there are still some gaps. Many networking organizations do not have adequate comprehensive leadership development plans, which results in poor leadership. In the future, frameworks need to focus on enhancing networking outcomes through leadership mentoring, executive coaching, and peer coaching. While transformational and strategic leadership styles are well understood, other forms of leadership such as servant and participative leadership might also be relevant to entrepreneurial networks and need further exploration. The shift to digital business models increases the need for integration of networking with digital leadership in order to enable the leaders to use technology for better networking results. Additionally, most entrepreneurial networks ignore succession planning, even though it is important for sustaining growth and stability long-term. There needs to be a proactive plan for ensuring change within most networking organizations to maintain continuity and sustainability.

This confirms that networking success in entrepreneurship relies heavily on leadership. For business networks to stay competitive, however, leadership strategies should incorporate developable adaptability and changeable

leadership models, technological responsiveness, and collaborative leadership. Additional studies need to create comprehensive leadership models specific to entrepreneurial networks, investigate the effectiveness of leadership digitalization, look into the issues of cultural differences in leadership, and design plans for strategic succession.

Entrepreneurial networking relies chiefly on leadership's capacity to motivate, direct, and respond. Integrated visionary leadership, active listening, and participatory decision-making change networking organizations into ecosystems with resilience and growth. Respondents stressed that cohesive leadership integrates stakeholder participation in the achievement of strategic objectives, nurtures sustainability, and improves competitiveness of the business. Many mentioned these organizations, BNI and JMBA, as exemplary networking organizations because their companies had well-defined networking leadership policies and operational plans.

Leadership in networks is not only directing an organization but nurturing a system in which enterprises work together, innovate, and responsibly grow. Networking leaders are those who have marginalized personal interests in favor of community ones. The "Givers Gain" philosophy which BNI strongly advocates captures this ideal: true leaders enable others, build conditions for sharing, and provide guarantees that the act of networking utilizes resources and contributes value. With strong value-driven networking policies in place, Malaysian SMEs are bound to succeed with the right leadership strategy in a fiercely competitive environment.

4.6.5 Interview Question 5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization?

This section discusses the findings of the research data in relation of the fifth research question: *How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization?* There were three themes namely training, staff satisfaction and succession planning involved in this analysis to answer the research question.

4.6.5.1 Summary of Interview Question 5

The quoted passages provide insights into the importance of training and development initiatives in improving employee performance and job satisfaction in organizations. Verbatim 4 emphasizes the value of motivating employees through diverse training programs, including skill development sessions and specialized software courses like Excel. This underscores the significance of continuous learning to enhance employee skills and engagement, which is essential in the context of entrepreneurial networking framework.

On the other hand, Verbatim 5 emphasizes the critical role of education and human resource training in helping employees adapt to changes within the organization. As organization evolves, employees must be equipped with the adequate knowledge and management skills to integrate new processes seamlessly into their work routines and enable them to be empowered with higher autonomy in controlling the company. This aligns with the concept of entrepreneurial networking, where adaptability and learning agility are key factors in navigating dynamic business dynamics.

Additionally, Verbatim 12 highlights the importance of training in facilitating effective organizational change. Change is a constant movement, thus, "conditions to change" is also required to be changed from time to time. By providing employees with the platform and knowledge to understand and embrace with new initiatives, organizations can improve their agility and critical responsiveness, these crucial elements in entrepreneurial networking where rapid adaptation to market trends and opportunities is paramount.

Moreover, Verbatim 2 and Verbatim 5 draw attention to the link between employee satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty. They conclude that happy and motivated employees are more likely to contribute positively to organizational goals and would stay committed to the company's vision and mission. This aligns with the entrepreneurial networking context, where motivated employees play a crucial role in fostering collaboration, innovation, and growth.

Lastly, Verbatim 7 and Verbatim 14 highlight the scheme of rewards and incentives in enhancing employee satisfaction and motivation. Recognizing and rewarding employees is an important process, whether through networking events or professional development opportunities like project management training, attending educational seminars and etc., can foster a positive work environment conducive to entrepreneurial networking efforts.

Accordingly, a detailed breakdown of the interview responses for this research question is provided in Exhibit 4.8.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Motivational Factors for Business Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Sessions or Skills Learning Courses 	skill	4, 5 & 12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Satisfaction 	satisfact	2, 5 & 7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession Planning 	SuccPlan	14

Exhibit 4.8: Summary of Research Question 5

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 4.5 below to show the connection between the leadership styles within the context of this research question. More discussion will be made in the next section.

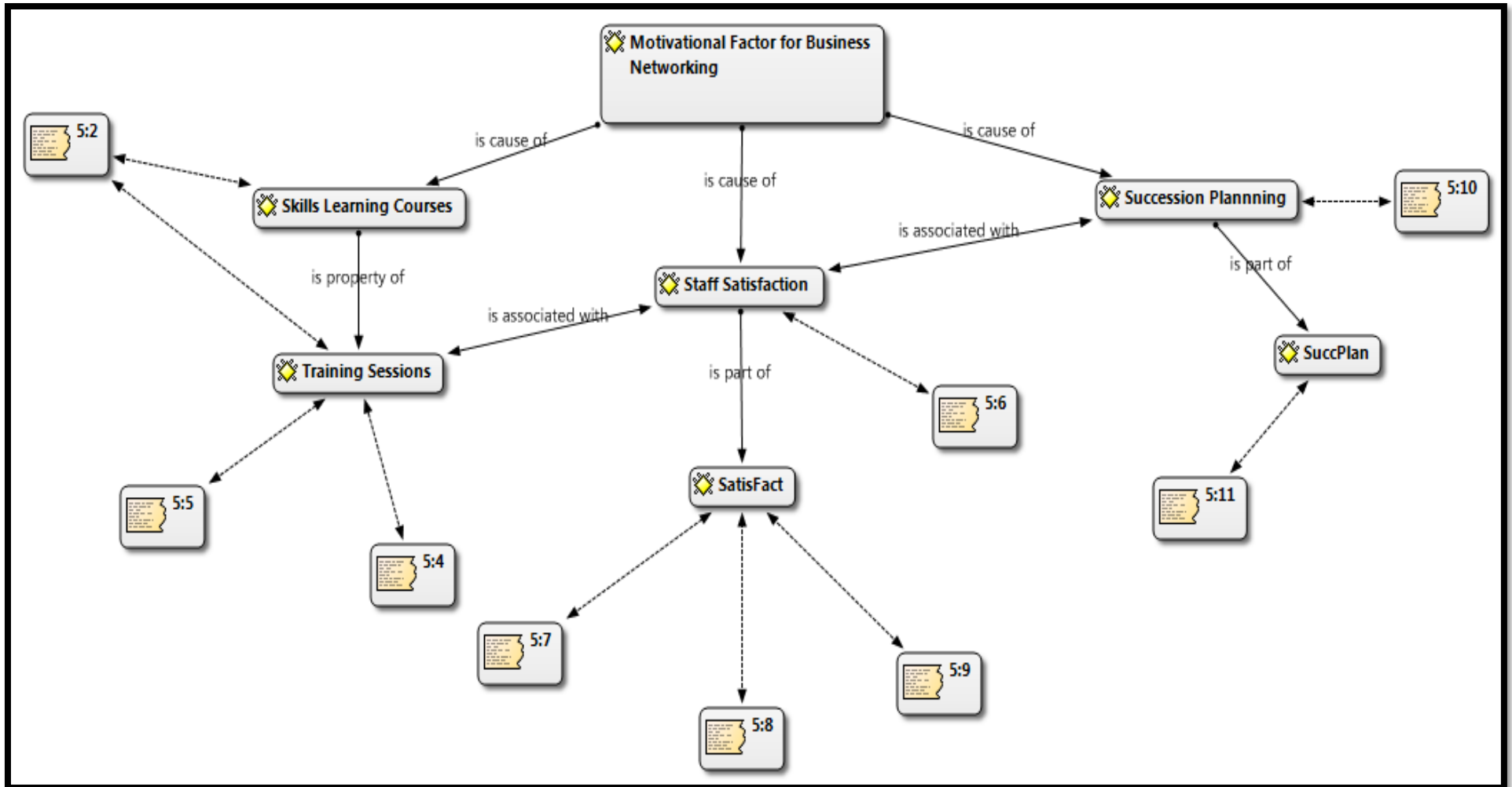


Figure 4.5: Motivational Factors for Business Networking

4.6.5.2 Discussion of Findings 5

I. Training Sessions or Skills Learning Courses

Designing training sessions or skills learning courses is paramount in facilitating swift integration for new hires into a company's operations and keeping long-term employees informed about any updated policies. Robust training not only equips employees with the necessary skills for their roles but also contributes to heightened job satisfaction across the board, as noted by three respondents.

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 1:21 (4:4)

...Encourage them to take part in new courses, such as motivation skills training sessions or skills learning courses such as advanced excel software and etc. ...

P 5: Verbatim 5.docx – 2:43 (97:97)

...Education and training is essential for employees to understand and adapt to a change in the workforce. When a new process is put into place, employees will likely be unfamiliar with the process and how it will fit into their daily workflow...

P 12: Verbatim 12.docx – 3:14 (77:77)

... Training in this situation is necessary to help employees become familiar with the change and better adapt to it ...

II. Staff Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction pertains to the contentment of staff members with their roles and remuneration scheme, whereas employee engagement indicates their level of enthusiasm and involvement within their work's place. While employee engagement is often a reflection of employee satisfaction, it's important to note that satisfied employees may not always be fully engaged in their tasks as find out from the respondents. Thus, an engaged employee should demonstrate a high self-motivation and a willingness to exceed job requirements, nevertheless, a satisfied employee may simply fulfil basic job duties without going the extra mile.

The data reveals a common perspective among three respondents regarding the importance of staff satisfaction in motivating employees within a social networking organization.

P 2: Verbatim 2.docx – 1:18 (150:150)

... Happy staff will generate higher results. And stay longer within the company...

P 5: Verbatim 5.docx – 3:17 (144:144)

... When employees feel their employer is taking care of them, they may express more satisfaction in their career path and perform work duties more efficiently...

P 7: Verbatim 7.docx – 4:14 (137:137)

...rewards can be gathered in the networking events, or even during team bonding....

III. Succession Planning

Succession planning is the corporate strategy for passing on leadership roles to next in line of management or appoint someone at the C-suite level to take control of the company and to take the whole control stake of a company, to one individual or group of individuals who possess the capabilities.

P 14: Verbatim 14.docx – 1:13 (90:90)

...Short and long-term plans. Experience inclined. Additional management courses for project management level to enhance their skills. And the tuition fees will be subsidized...

4.6.5.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 5

FINDINGS 5: How do you motivate your staff in the social networking organization?

This research marks the importance of motivation in keeping entrepreneurial networking organizations alive, especially in the Malaysian SME ecosystem. It determines some of the building blocks for employee engagement and sustained success as training and development, employee morale, and succession planning. A properly designed motivational scheme is important for the growth of a business ecosystem.

The findings also stress the importance of training and development as a productivity multiplier. Putting resources into employees' skills generates a more adaptable and competitive workforce. However, training must be suitable to the objectives of the organization. Training does not yield productive output when it is not specific enough. Therefore, entrepreneurial networking organizations ought to provide strategic training on a need basis to help employees adapt to the changing business environment.

Employee satisfaction and engagement were identified as two important facilitating factors of motivation. Employees who are recognized and feel that they belong to the organization become more productive. Nevertheless, engagement should transcend satisfaction; there has to be a strong sense of commitment and responsibility towards the organization. Networking organizations ought to focus on strategies that promote higher levels of

employee involvement such that they meaningfully contribute to the success of the business.

Another notable finding is the importance of maintaining continuity in leadership through succession planning. The study underscores the fact that several organizations, especially SMEs, do not have detailed succession planning which results in leadership voids after certain people leave the organization. Thorough mentorship, leadership, and skill development training should be merged into effective succession planning to help emerging leaders well-in-advance. Instead of being reactive, leadership continuity ought to be a strategic process that is proactively designed – and embedded – into organizational structures.

Alongside these positive observations, the study highlights gaps within contemporary motivational approaches. More traditional extramural motivators such as salary bonuses are still preferred while new forms of employee engagement value intrinsic motivation – purpose, autonomy, and mastery. Organizations would benefit from a change in direction towards fostering motivation that centers on personal growth objectives. Furthermore, individual motivational strategies are too often ignored. Employees have different motivating stimuli, and employing a single approach does not maximize participation. Social networking organizations should implement a personalized approach that corresponds with individual career aspirations and desired learning opportunities.

The research highlights the lack of motivation in digital forms in some firms. As new technology emerges, there are new ways to motivate employees, but many companies do not utilize AI training, virtual mentoring, and digital socializing as motivation enhancers. The application of these instruments into motivation frameworks can increase accessibility, knowledge retention, and participation.

In order to remain sustainable in the long-term, social networking organizations need to implement a comprehensive motivation framework that combines rigid training, proactive motivational processes, and digitalization. Next generation entrepreneurial networks should emphasize the creation of work culture focused on innovation, cooperation, and self-growth at the professional level. Such changes will increase employee loyalty, productivity, and improve the organization's competitiveness in the fluctuating business environment.

In conclusion, the study makes it clear that motivation within entrepreneurial clusters is more than performance; it is at the center of a truly sustainable and adaptive ecosystem that responds to business needs. Networking organizations can create an actively engaged workforce willing to drive business change and achieve multi-dimensional growth by implementing strategic training, employee satisfaction interventions, and innovative succession plans.

4.6.6 Interview Question 6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?

This section discusses the findings of the research data in relation of the sixth research question: *Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?* There are two themes involved in this question: namely, communication and teamwork for investigation.

4.6.6.1 Summary of Interview Question 6

When examining how entrepreneurs connect with SMEs in Malaysia, the direct quotes stress the importance of transferable skills and teamwork, in driving business success. Verbatim 2 emphasizes the value of communication skills pointing out that a customer service representative who excels in communication can effectively apply those skills to marketing or sales positions. This highlights how skills can be adapted across roles within a company, which is crucial in entrepreneurial networking where individuals often take on various responsibilities and collaborate across different areas.

Furthermore, Verbatim 3 underscores the role of communication for entrepreneurs. It is repeatedly mentioned that strong communication is vital when interacting with clients, investors, partners and employees. Having communication abilities can influence the outcomes of these interactions, this is contributed to business growth and relationship building. This ties in with the core of networking, which heavily relies on communication to establish and foster professional connections by connecting people together.

Additionally, having skills and being an active listener are highlighted as key elements for building positive relationships as discussed in Verbatim 7. These qualities are especially valuable within networking scenarios where establishing rapport and trust with stakeholders are crucial, for achieving business goals and seizing opportunities.

Furthermore, Verbatim 4 highlights the significance of teamwork, in business ventures underscoring the aspect for achieving success within a company. This aligns well with the principles of networking, where working together and cooperating with team members within their networking group, partners within their organizations and other network stakeholders play a role in fostering innovation, efficiency and productivity as stated in Verbatim 6. In essence, these observations underscore the interplay of skills, effective communication, teamwork and relationship building when entrepreneurial networking for SMEs in Malaysia.

Accordingly, a detailed breakdown of the interview responses for this research question is provided in Exhibit 4.9.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Transferable Skills Via	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Skills 	Comskill	2, 3 & 7

Entrepreneurial			
Networking		TeWork	4 & 6
	• Team Work		

Exhibit 4.9: Summary of Research Question 6

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 4.6 below to show the connection between the transferable skills within the context of this research question. More discussion will be made in the next section.

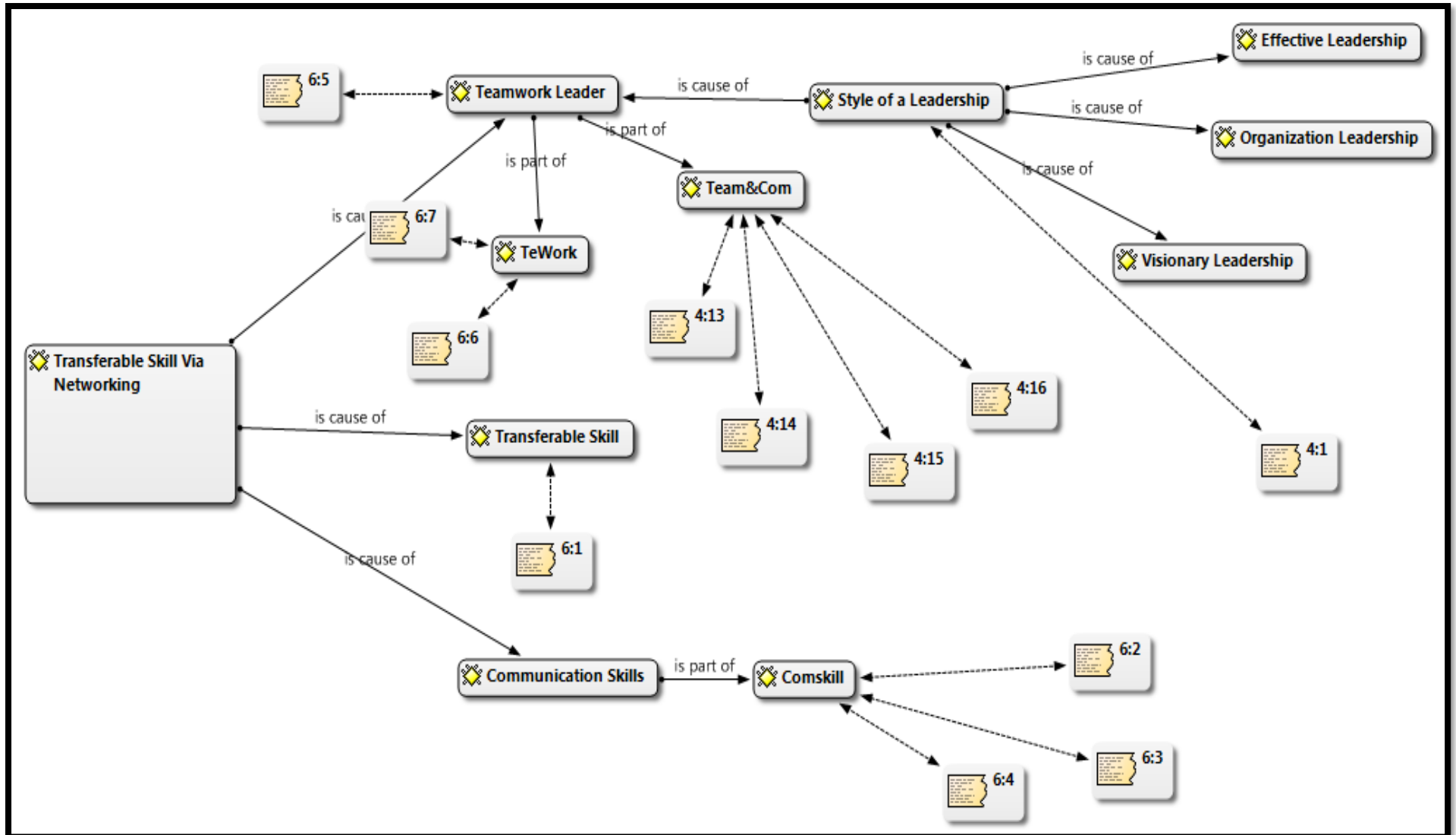


Figure 4.6: Critical Success Factors for Business Networking

4.6.6.2 Discussion of Findings 6

In today's dynamic job market, the capacity to transfer skills across industries holds increasing significance. With constant shifts in industries, the ability to showcase adaptability and transferable skills has become essential for job seekers to maintain competitiveness. Thus, entrepreneurs must seek a transparent and transferable skills to pass on to their employees as succession planning, which is help to attain higher employee's satisfaction, this approach would allow them to stay longer in the same workplace.

This is interesting to note that transferable skills encompass the proficiencies and characteristics individuals that is acquire through their work experiences, which can be effectively applied across diverse job roles and industries. The effort is collective by putting forward the initial stage through engaging these transferable skills lies to help them in identifying their roles accurately and work efficiently to facilitate their roles at the job place or excel in their respective industries successfully.

The research inquiry investigates into the realm of transferable skills facilitated by entrepreneurial networking, shedding light on their pivotal role in today's competitive business landscape. As industries evolve and transform, individuals need to showcase their versatility and ability to navigate diverse professional environments and developments. This explained the reason of the researcher's research emphasizes on the strategic factors in recognizing and harnessing transferable skills, highlighting their potentials to bridge gaps between industries and enhance employment adaptability. This exploration is grounded in the

understanding that entrepreneurial networking serves as a conduit for acquiring and honing transferable skills, through empowering individuals to thrive in dynamic job markets and create higher employee retention.

Furthermore, the analysis examines into specific strategies and mechanisms employed within entrepreneurial networks to facilitate the transfer of skills across different segment of industries. By fostering collaborative environments and facilitating knowledge exchange, entrepreneurial networks enable individuals to leverage their existing skills and acquire new ones that are transferrable and applicable in various professional contexts. The research underscores the transformative impact of entrepreneurial networking in enhancing individuals' adaptability, promoting continuous skill development, and ultimately, fostering career resilience in an ever-evolving job landscape, henceforth, high employee satisfaction, higher employee retention within the organization as the key progressive soft element as identified in McKinsey's model.

I. Communication Skills

According to the data, three respondents were mention about had a common viewpoint on communication skills as the skills should be able to transfer via entrepreneurial networking.

P 2: Verbatim 2.docx – 1:18 (150:150)

... a customer service representative who has strong communication skills can transfer those skills to a marketing or sales role...

P 3: Verbatim 3.docx – 3:17 (144:144)

... good communication is essential for entrepreneurs. Good communication can determine the outcome, whether you are meeting with potential clients or investors or working with partners or employees...

P 7: Verbatim 7.docx – 4:14 (137:137)

... strong interpersonal skills and good active listening skills are critical for forming good relationship....

II. Teamwork

Teamwork offers numerous benefits despite occasional challenges and complexities that may arise, such as stress and disorderliness. Effective collaboration among team members can be initially challenging due to the diverse personalities and divergence in perspectives involved. However, over time, genuine teamwork can evolve and thrive, leading to enhanced productivity and outcomes with great team players.

According to the research findings, two respondents expressed a shared perspective regarding the transferability of teamwork skills through entrepreneurial networking. This suggests that the skills and experiences gained from successful teamwork can be effectively leveraged and applied

within the context of entrepreneurial networking, emphasizing the interconnectedness and transferability of skills across different professional domains.

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 1:13 (90:90)

... We build companies which are evidence of teamwork. In our search for “self-made” billionaires and tech icons to fawn over, I think we’ve really forgotten that almost everything we do is actually in teams...

P 6: Verbatim 6.docx – 2:10 (79:79)

... Working together can improve efficiency and productivity...

4.6.6.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 6

FINDINGS 6: Are there any transferable skills via entrepreneurial networking?

This research is significant because it illustrates the impact of teamwork and communication as integral soft skills in entrepreneurial networking. These skills improve collaboration, flexibility, and business performance, especially in the context of Malaysia’s SME ecosystem. There is no single networking activity in entrepreneurship that does not require communication. Entrepreneurs foster business relationships, convey business concepts and negotiate deals, all of which depend on effective communication. Entrepreneurs with good communication

skills can readily perform and integrate different business functions such as sales, marketing, and customer service, which enhances their mobility and sustainability in business. Also, interpersonal communication, with the aid of emotional intelligence, reinforces engagement, thereby enhancing collaboration with other stakeholders and investors.

The results also reinforce the importance of teamwork in an entrepreneurial network, especially in environments that are intercultural and interdisciplinary. Entrepreneurial networks are characterized by the existence of collective intelligence, where resources and ideas are pooled together to enhance innovation and scalability of the business. Competent teams demonstrate competitiveness in the corporate world and thus contribute to job satisfaction, lower attrition rates, and organizational longevity. Networking enables entrepreneurs to solve problems, create innovative business ideas, and automate processes.

Aside from building business relations, networking improves the transfer of skills and knowledge. Staff and business owners obtain relevant industry information, management information, and standards that can be utilized in various positions and sectors. This corresponds with McKinsey's 7S Framework, which emphasizes that shared values, learning, and leadership development are vital for competitive advantage. Networking for entrepreneurs serves as a forum for where the transfer of skills enhances flexibility, business innovation, and sustained growth.

While the study emphasizes the role of communication and teamwork on skill transfer, it also notes a deficiency in the use of modern digital networking tools. With the rise of virtual networking, computer literacy and interaction online have come to be essential for an entrepreneur. It is necessary for organizations to promote active and well-defined mentorship and training to raise the level of professionalism, to close the skill gap, and to prepare employees for multi-business environments. Planning for succession within entrepreneurial networks is equally significant, allowing future leaders to maintain business contacts and ensure the continuity of the networking organizations.

As entrepreneurs continue strengthening professional relationships, the study states that networking skills become useful even in the absence of formal network memberships. The respondents indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, networking digital platforms helped in maintaining business activity and continuity. Even when the economy was unstable, business owners were actively looking for possibilities, signifying that technology driven networking broadens market perspective and links businesses across the globe without geographic boundaries. Business growth is made possible due to the ability to shift and mobilize skills beyond network membership where networks are able to provide opportunities long after formal affiliations are ended.

In conclusion, effective entrepreneurial networking cannot be achieved without effective communication and teamwork. These skills help drive business collaboration, knowledge transfer, and sustainability. Entrepreneurial networks are not simply platforms for commercial transactions, but entrepreneurial

ecosystems where transferable skill are harnessed to innovate and penetrate new markets. Networking organizations can promote professional development, strengthen business relations, and guarantee sustainable entrepreneurial success by improving policies on directed mentorship, the use of digital networking platforms, and skill transfer policies.

4.6.7 Interview Question 7: Whats the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications?

The research data sheds light on how networking impacts endeavours emphasizing the effects beyond individual's business operations. A key insight from the study is the notion of the value creation, which offers firms a way to broaden their perspectives beyond processes. Often companies focus solely on optimizing their operations without realizing that issues within the value creating system can impede overall success. This prejudiced approach can result in wasted efforts if the broader system is ineffective or if customers fail to perceive the value provided by the company. The concept of the value creation underpins how interconnected stakeholders are in a business ecosystem utilizing the need to consider the value creating system than just isolated company actions. For entrepreneurs involved in networking activities grasping this view of the system is essential, to achieve success in business.

4.6.7.1 Summary of Interview Question 7

A direct quote from the respondents emphasizes the advantages of networking for entrepreneurs at large. At first, networking helps in obtaining insights and

perspectives, for making informed decisions in business expansion as documented in Verbatim 1 and Verbatim 6. Engaging with a network enables entrepreneurs to access a wealth of knowledge and experiences is vital for business' planning and operational implementation.

Furthermore, networking facilitates in developing a brand and increasing industry visibility as mentioned in Verbatim 4. Through networking activities and sharing as the respective experts or successful entrepreneurs will position themselves as figures enhancing their credibility and reputation within their fields.

Additionally, networking opens opportunities for growth and expansion as expressed in Verbatim 9. Thus, entrepreneurs can leverage their network connections to explore possibilities establish partnerships, investments and receive mentorship. All of these are crucial elements for scaling their ventures and pave them a way more successfully.

Moreover, networking allows entrepreneurs to stay updated on industry trends and advancements as cited in Verbatim 4. This awareness is key to staying competitive and innovative enabling entrepreneurs to adjust their strategies and offerings according to market changes. In essence, networking plays an important role, in fostering business success and supporting business's development with many implications of success factors.

Accordingly, a detailed breakdown of the interview responses for this research question is provided in Exhibit 4.10.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Respondents (Verbatim)
Most Important Core Values in Entrepreneurial Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources 	Resource	1, 4 & 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding New Opportunities 	Opport	9 & 13
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staying Current with Industry Trends 	InTrend	4 & 6

Exhibit 4.10: Summary of Research Question 7

A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 4.7 below to show the connection between important core values in entrepreneurial networking within the context of this particular research question.

More discussion will be made in the next section.

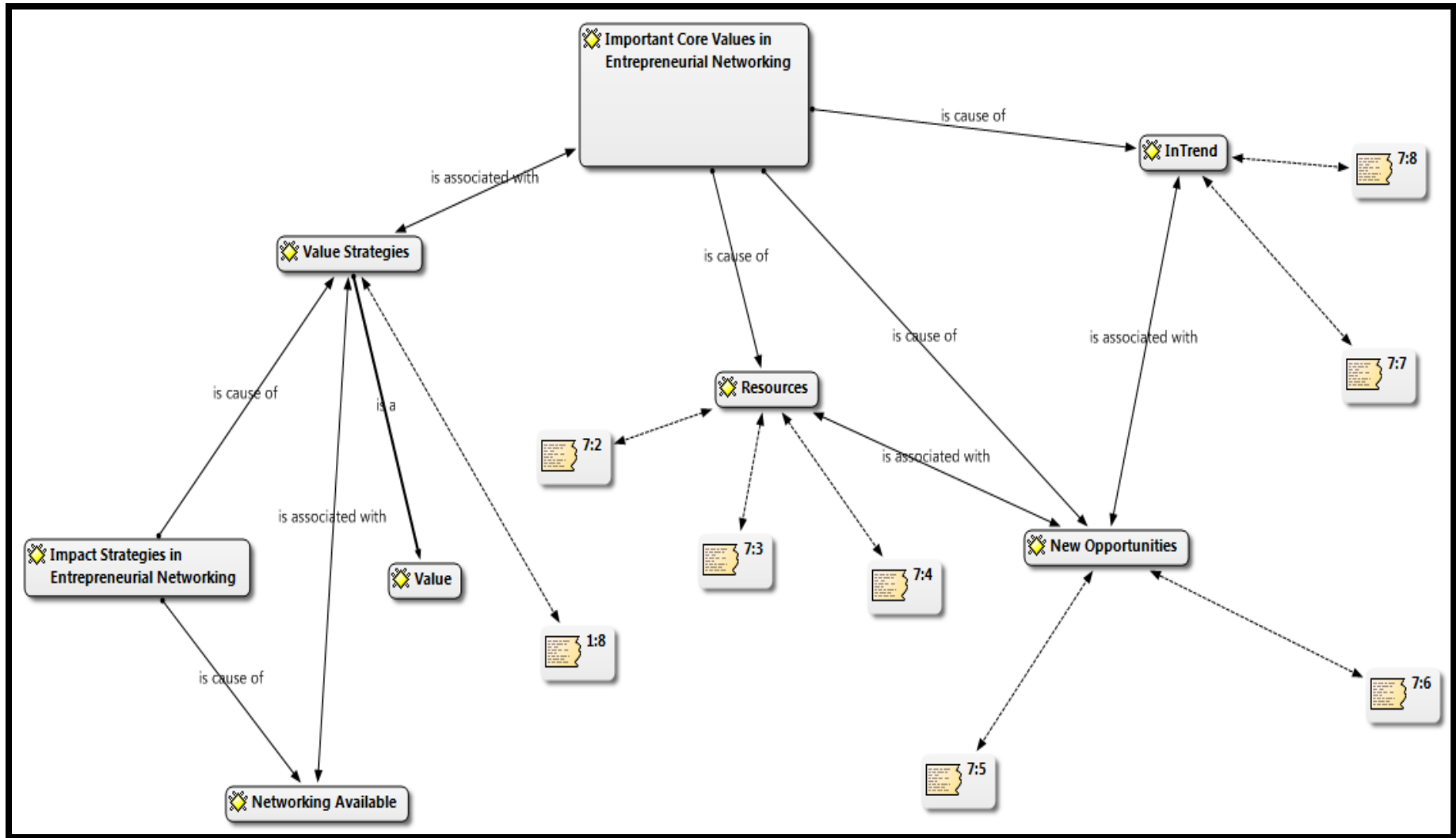


Figure 4.7: Most Important Core Values in Entrepreneurial Networking

4.6.7.2 Discussion of Findings 7

Building a stronger relationship through networking is essential for entrepreneurs to access wide range of resources, knowledge and opportunities that go beyond their reach. This helps them navigate the complexities of the business world more effectively. Moreover, the study highlights three themes that play a role in creating value for entrepreneurship through business networking. These themes cover areas such as innovation reaching markets or customer segments and establishing a stronger presence and reputation within the industry. By delving into these themes entrepreneurs can better understand how networking contributes to their strategies for creating value and how they can make the most of networking opportunities to foster growth and success in their best interest.

I. Resources

Gaining access to resources via networks is a benefit for entrepreneurs during the venture creation process. Networks, those with connections facilitate access to essential resources needed to capitalize on identified opportunities. Strong relationships within networks are particularly valuable as they boost network members willingness to support entrepreneurs compared to connections. Entrepreneurs often assess their ability to obtain resources at a cost based on the strength of their ties.

Therefore, a network characterized by ties enhances the likelihood of potential entrepreneurs taking decisive steps by reducing uncertainties related to potential returns, from investing in specific opportunities.

This underscores the significance of having a network with an number of connections at the appropriate time spend, as it helps reduce perceived risks and motivates entrepreneurial networking. The viewpoints shared by three respondents (P1, P4 and

P15) emphasize the importance of relationships, in network interactions on how they influence entrepreneurial choices and approaches, to acquiring resources.

P 1: Verbatim 1.docx – 1:21 (74:74)

... you can gain valuable insights and perspectives that can help you make better decisions for your business....

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 2:43 (97:97)

... Networking can help you build your personal brand and get your name out there. By connecting with others and sharing your expertise, you can establish yourself as a thought leader in your industry...

P 15: Verbatim 15.docx – 3:14 (97:97)

... Yes. Gain more knowledge and don't limit yourself. ...

II. Finding New Opportunities

Finding business opportunities offers several benefits, including increased revenue generation, market expansion, create competitive advantage, fostering innovation, risk mitigation, forming partnerships, and facilitating long-term growth and sustainability. This attribute enables businesses growth by tapping into new markets to meet new demands, diversify their customer base offer lower risk in business, differentiate themselves compared to competitors, constant innovate themselves for new products, and navigate market fluctuations and explore new business's opportunities more

effectively. Overall, identifying and seeking on business opportunities is crucial for organizational success and resilience in dynamic business environments.

According to the data, two respondents (P9 and P13) were mentioned about had a common viewpoint on entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications.

P 9: Verbatim 9.docx – 1:18 (150:150)

... Networking can help you discover new opportunities for growth and expansion...

P 13: Verbatim 13.docx – 3:17 (144:144)

... You can meet potential customers, partners, investors, and mentors who can help you take your business to the next level ...

III. Staying Current with Industry Trends

Networking plays a role; in helping entrepreneurs stay up to date with industry trends ensuring they stay competitive and well informed through information sharing in their fields. By participating in networking events entrepreneurs can tap into a wealth of knowledge and insights from industry colleagues, mentors and leaders. These interactions offer more opportunities to learn about market trends, technological advancements, market changes and best practices among seasoned networkers.

Additionally, networking supports continuous professional development and provides an opportunity for the growth of entrepreneurs. Through regular meet ups, workshops, seminars and conferences within business circles, entrepreneurs can broaden their knowledge base and develop their skills by gaining broader perspectives on industry challenges and opportunities. This ongoing learning process enables entrepreneurs to adjust themselves to evolving market dynamics and help to innovate their business strategies and make better strategic decisions.

Moreover, networking boosts an entrepreneur's personal brand and visibility within the industry. By engaging in networking activities contributing to discussions sharing expertise and forming relationships; entrepreneurs can establish themselves as leaders and experts in their field. This heightened visibility not just attracts business prospects and partnerships but also fosters credibility and trust among stakeholders such, as customers, investors and members of the societies.

Networking helps entrepreneurs stay updated on industry trends with a constant learning and development, so it enhances their brand and strategically position for sustaining themselves for a long-term success, in today's ever changing business environment.

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 1:13 (90:90)

... Networking can help you stay up to date with the latest industry trends and developments, which can be invaluable for staying ahead of the competition...

P 6: Verbatim 6.docx – 2:10 (79:79)

... By connecting with others in your industry, you can gain valuable insights and perspectives that can help you make better decisions for your business....

4.6.7.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 7

FINDINGS 7: Whats the value being created for entrepreneurship in business networking and its implications?

The research outlined above underscores the effect business networking has towards acquiring business networking as its element but also includes the other aspects of resources and opportunities retrieval and industry's proficiency. Networking permits entrepreneurs to acquire financial, informational, and human resources that aid in the expansion and sustainability of the business. The findings are in line with Social Network Theory which suggests that social capital in the form of strong social ties enables trust-based interactions and partnerships amongst powerful entrepreneurs, which makes them ever more resourceful.

Through networking, entrepreneurs are also able to receive intelligence on possible market opportunities ahead of other people. Business events, trade associations, and online forums assist networking individuals in discovering new customers, investors, and partners. Inter-industry networking leads to the creation of innovative and sustainable business approaches, which enables entrepreneurs to remain competitive. Moreover, networking helps entrepreneurs to be updated on the changes in the industry and the regulatory environment as well as technological changes. Through conferences, discussions and professional associations, business leaders can adapt to changes in the environment and have a proactive approach to being economically robust when the conditions are at their worst.

Even with these benefits in mind, there remains room for further study. The use of digital social networking sites like LinkedIn and AI-powered business communities is undeniably growing, but their contribution to entrepreneurial performance requires more analysis. On top of this, while networking enhances the visibility of a business and contributes to short-term growth, the long-term financial, as well as sustainability impacts, are much less understood. Effectiveness of networking also has cross cultural and regional differences that need to be studied further in order to understand the interaction of business with different economies.

The results confirm that networking is one of the most important factors that leads to entrepreneurial success, as it helps businesses acquire necessary resources, find new expansion opportunities, and respond to market changes. Entrepreneurs should strategically use networking through traditional and digital means to enhance their market position. Further research can be conducted regarding the impact of digital changes on networking and international business expansion.

Networking plays an important role on the development of corporate culture, collective decision-making, and organizational planning. Entrepreneurs acquire important industry information, develop strong personal reputations, and obtain recognition by participating in networking. These activities help with resource allocation, monitoring changes, and formulating new business ideas. Strong network relationships create opportunities for partnership, joint venture, or private equity investment, which enhances the sustainability and competitiveness of a firm.

Trust is one like the main components whilst networking, it acts as the primary pillar for long-lasting partnerships. Trust within networked situations is not simply an exercise but a personal quality that emerges through repeated participation and dependability. It breeds kindness, mutual aid, as well as responsibility, which makes the relationships more productive. In alignment with insights by Ehrlichman (2021) and the core principles from BNI, trust stems from dependability, transparency, care, and trust. Trustworthy people foster confidence by attending to their promises, while transparency guarantees free and sincere interaction. Care enhances bonds, while appreciation enables openness and acceptance within the network.

Networking at its best needs effective leadership that initiates trust, participation, and collaboration. It is imperative for network leaders to establish a culture that appreciates diversity, other opinions, and appreciation. The identification of individual talents contributes to cohesion which leads to stronger relationships and subsequently, increased business activities. To conclude, the networking under entrepreneurship relies heavily on trust, shared objectives, and purposeful actions which reiterate the need for meticulous approaches towards achieving enduring results.

4.6.8 Interview Question 8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work?

This section delves into the core of the research findings regarding the eighth research question; How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work? The analysis focused on one theme to address this question.

4.6.8.1 Summary of Interview Question 8

The direct quotes shared by respondents shed light on the dynamics of management and leadership, with some shared the requirements of change.

In one instance as mentioned in Verbatim 4, it is pointed out that standard frameworks or models may not always be the best fit, due to cultural differences and other variables. This implies the importance of taking subtleties into account and embracing strategies in managing organizations to effectively address diverse circumstances.

Another viewpoint, articulated in Verbatim 8 delves into the progression of management techniques highlighting the prominence of the methodology particularly within Japanese contexts. However, with the introduction of Industry 4.0 technologies like robotics there arises a necessity to modify approaches to align with advancements and industry shifts. This approach will stimulate the interest for continuous advancement and improvement in management model.

This is interesting to note that Verbatim 14 underscores the role of leadership during the transformation periods of change. It stresses the requirement for leaders who can grasp, initiate and oversee these transformations competently. This underscores the importance of leadership flexibility and adeptness in managing change as key drivers for prosperity and resilience successfully.

Within this study's, Figure 4.8 lies a summary of research discoveries demonstrating the connection between principles, in entrepreneurial networking. The objective is to construct a framework tailored for entrepreneurs involved in business networking

endeavours with an ultimate goal of fostering sustainable growth in a business ecosystem. This graphic illustrates the components outlined in the study showcasing how they are interconnected and important, in developing networking tactics for entrepreneurs to thrive and ensure lasting viability. More discussion will be made in the next section.

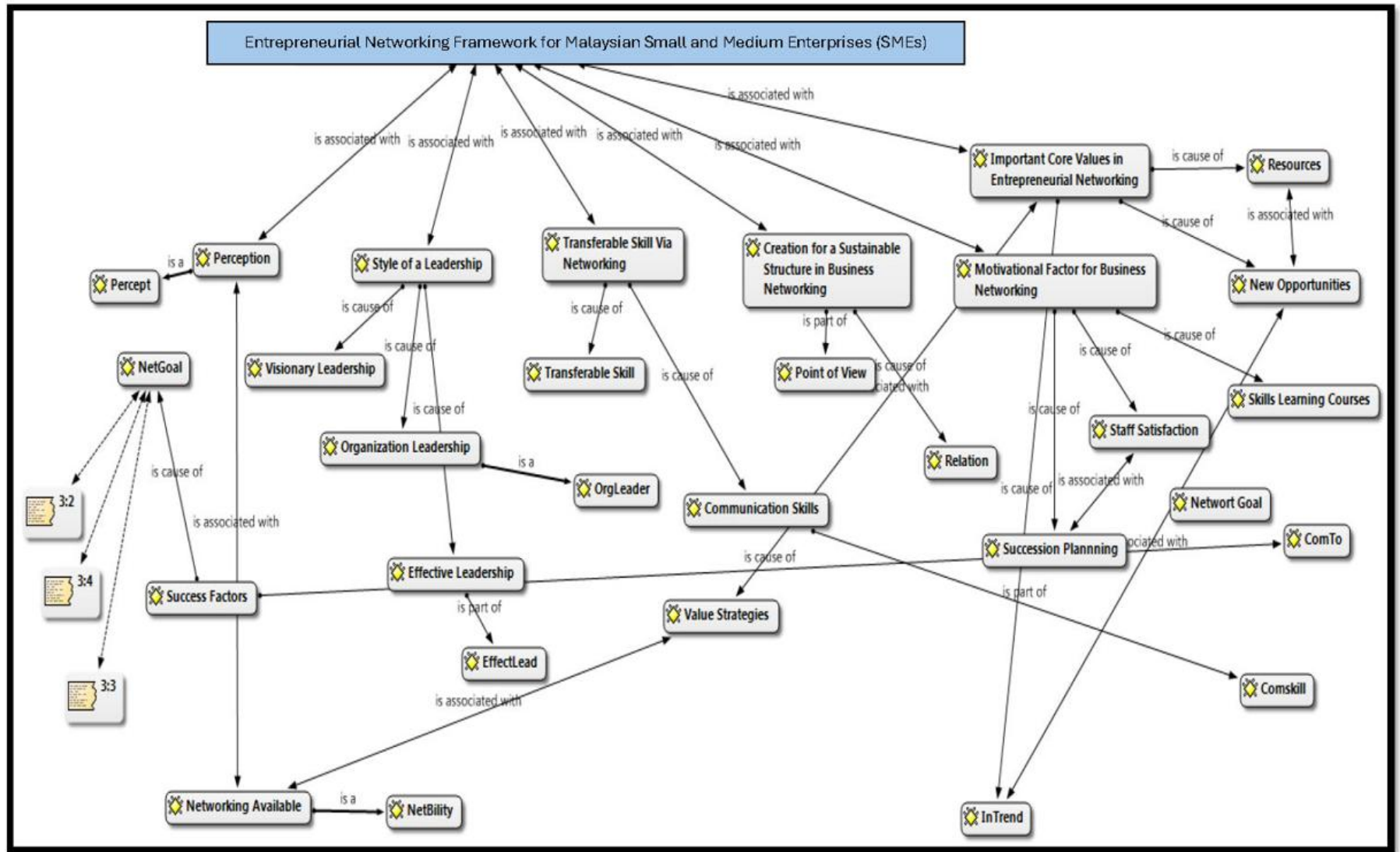


Figure 4.8: Proposed an Entrepreneurial Networking Model

4.6.8.2 Discussion of Findings 8

The suggested sustainable business networking model is closely linked to the concept of networking framework emphasizing cooperation at corporate level, shared values by creating co-branding so to attain mutual benefits among key stakeholders. This model prioritizes cultivating enduring relationships among a range of stakeholders which added values to each other. In business networking establishment, connections with partners, investors and customers is essential for creating golden opportunities and striving for business growth. Similarly, the sustainable business networking model highlights trust, respect and collaboration among businesses, communities and other stakeholders to achieve outcomes according to many respondents.

Moreover, the business networking's conceptual model stresses the significance of shared values and common objectives. In an effective networking, aligning with partners who share values and goals can result in more meaningful and productive collaborations. Similarly, the sustainable business networking model places emphasis on shared values related to sustainability such as business fellowship and social responsibility to promote action and positive impact for the growth for individual or for the company.

Additionally, the business networking model facilitates the sharing of information, knowledge and resources among respondents. In networking exchanging insights, expertise and resources can lead to business opportunities partnerships as well, as innovations to change.

Lastly, the sustainable business networking model encourages sharing knowledge using resources efficiently and implementing practices to tackle sustainability issues and bring about changes. In essence the synergy, between the business networking model and

entrepreneurial networking underscores the significance of teamwork, mutual values, information sharing, resolving constant challenges, enhancing entrepreneurial skills and ongoing progress in advancing growth and attain entrepreneurial achievements.

1. Entrepreneurial Networking Framework

The sustainable business networking framework operates based on principles derived from organization's vision and mission, for its optimum efficiency and pave them ways to success. It emphasizes the importance of establishing lasting relationships and partnerships among businesses, key stakeholders and related communities with a focus on sustainability in business cycle. The following points explain how this model functions:

To start, the model emphasizes building enduring relationships among stakeholders including businesses, government entities, non profit organizations, communities and consumers. These relationships are built on trust, mutual respect and a shared commitment to practices and beyond just for entrepreneur's adaptation.

Additionally, the model thrives on aligning respondents around shared values and goals related to sustainability. These include network actions, social responsibility, economic viability and ethical business practices which is aimed at promoting collaboration towards development for business growth and advancement in professional's development.

Furthermore, sustainable business networking involves sharing information, knowledge and resources among its members. This exchange of insights, pool with the best

industrial practices, technological innovations and financial resources enables its members or respondents to learn from each other's expertise and collectively address sustainability challenges together.

Lastly, sustainable business networking encourages problem solving by leveraging perspectives from different industries, skills and experiences, within the same network. This collaborative approach allows for the creation of effective solutions, to challenging sustainability issues like climate change, resource scarcity, social inequality, environmental issue and many more contemporary topics.

Additionally, the model highlights the importance of building skills by empowering individuals or certain organizations and even a networking platforms / organizations or communities. It involves programs dedicated to training, education and support to enhance sustainability expertise among network members enabling businesses and communities to take steps towards good practices. More importantly, ongoing learning and progress are components of the model achieved through feedback loops, performance tracking and evaluations. Regular assessments help identify areas for improvement adjust strategies and enhance impact and sustainability over time.

In essence, the sustainable business networking model acts as a framework that promotes development by fostering relationships based on shared values. It facilitates knowledge sharing, problem solving efforts capacity building initiatives while prioritizing entrepreneurial improvement, within network organizations and communities. Three respondents have shared their opinions as follows.

P 4: Verbatim 4.docx – 1:21 (74:74)

... standard modules/model may not be applicable due to the differentiation in cultures and etc...

P 8: Verbatim 8.docx – 2:43 (97:97)

...5S adapted by Japanese is very common in the past, however with the joining of industry 4.0 robotic...

P 14: Verbatim 14.docx – 3:14 (97:97)

...Leaders must know how to change and able to change...

4.6.8.3 Conclusion and Critical Review of Findings 8

FINDINGS 8: How does the Sustainable Business Networking Model work?

The emphasis of the study rests on the transformation of social business networks in relation to their contribution to entrepreneurship, strategic alliances, and the overall concern of business sustainability. This “shift” element in networking practices represents the move from mere contact building to deeper and mutual collaboration, value creation, knowledge transfer, and business sustainability. A Sustainable Business Networking Model is suggested that considers stakeholder participation, pro-active leadership, and flexibility to changing market conditions as fundamental components.

An important point is the move towards collaborative efforts that are primarily based on trust. Networking replaces competition with cooperative interactions that improve access to markets, sharing of resources, and overall business continuity. This shift is supported by the Social Network Theory which argues that firms achieve greater competitive benefits when they are integrated in relations with others that are strategically designed to allow for effective resource distribution and risk sharing.

The study draws attention to the necessity of agility in regard to constantly evolving industry boundaries. Changes in networking behavior results from the growth of artificial intelligence, automation, and blockchain technology, compelling business owners to use peripheral devices as part of their networking strategies. The use of such technologies for networking purposes signals a significant shift from traditional networking approaches, allowing for immediate market responsiveness and wider market access.

Another important "change" is the growing role of shared values and sustainability in networking. Businesses no longer deal in purely transactional partnerships. There are now ethical, social, and sustainability oriented partnerships. Entrepreneurs working in sustainability-focused networks have a competitive advantage, as socially responsible investors are more willing to engage and long term stake holder loyalty is nurtured.

Also, the study focuses on the exchange of knowledge and resources as one of the primary business networking activities. In order to keep pace with advancing trends, new technologies, and changing policies, businesses have to change their tactics through attending industry conferences, innovation centers, and professional networking. This guarantee that businesses remain relevant and competitive in rapidly changing industries.

Change in leadership profoundly influences the entrepreneurial networks change. Strong leaders must change the culture of simply managing everyday operational activities into developing business strategies and driving schema flexibility and industry change. Stagnation comes from strong resistance to change while strong leadership that encourages flexibility fosters competitiveness and sustainability.

Such gaps persist even with the innovations made to the Sustainable Business Networking Model. The need to analyze the movement towards digital networking environments like LinkedIn, AI matchmaking, and virtual communities is one of those gaps. Also, these strategies of cross-cultural networking need to be studied to determine the effectiveness of networking in different cultures economies. This is a gap in research regarding the visibility, reputation, and the impact of networking on business performance over time; it is well accepted that visibility and reputation will improve, but there is little understanding of the financial and innovation derived returns from such networking.

Flexibility in management practices and understanding the culture were other issues that the respondents of the study noted. To influence their stakeholder network, businesses need to change and consider different cultural views so that inclusivity can be supported. The need for change in management practices becomes more urgent with the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies such as AI, robotics, and automation.

Another vital element is the leadership in the change management. Despite the challenges that such change may pose, disdain for assimilation will keep an organization uncompetitive. A good and effective leader will anticipate changes in the industry,

motivate, and guide the team and the organization toward strategies that will aid in achieving sustainable business growth.

The Sustainable Business Networking Model offers an integrated framework for entrepreneurs interested in growth, strategic partnerships, and sustainability. Business growth through cooperative networking, digitization, and adapting to industry change allows for the formation of resilient value-driven business networks that provide competitive advantages.

Further studies should include the role of artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and cross-cultural networking in sustainable business development. As the sociocultural aspects of networking change, it is crucial for organizations to take an anticipatory position, which will help them survive in the modern economy.

The most important shift is that entrepreneurial networking is no longer viewed as a peripheral business activity, but rather as a core strategic matter. Networking SMEs in Malaysia are expected to increase their competitiveness by adopting networking as a disciplined goal-oriented approach. Networking is, therefore, a more complex phenomenon that, in addition to facilitating connections, enables constant change, business adaptability, and sustainability in a volatile business environment. The summary of results: A proposed sustainable entrepreneurial networking framework is illustrated in figure 4.9.

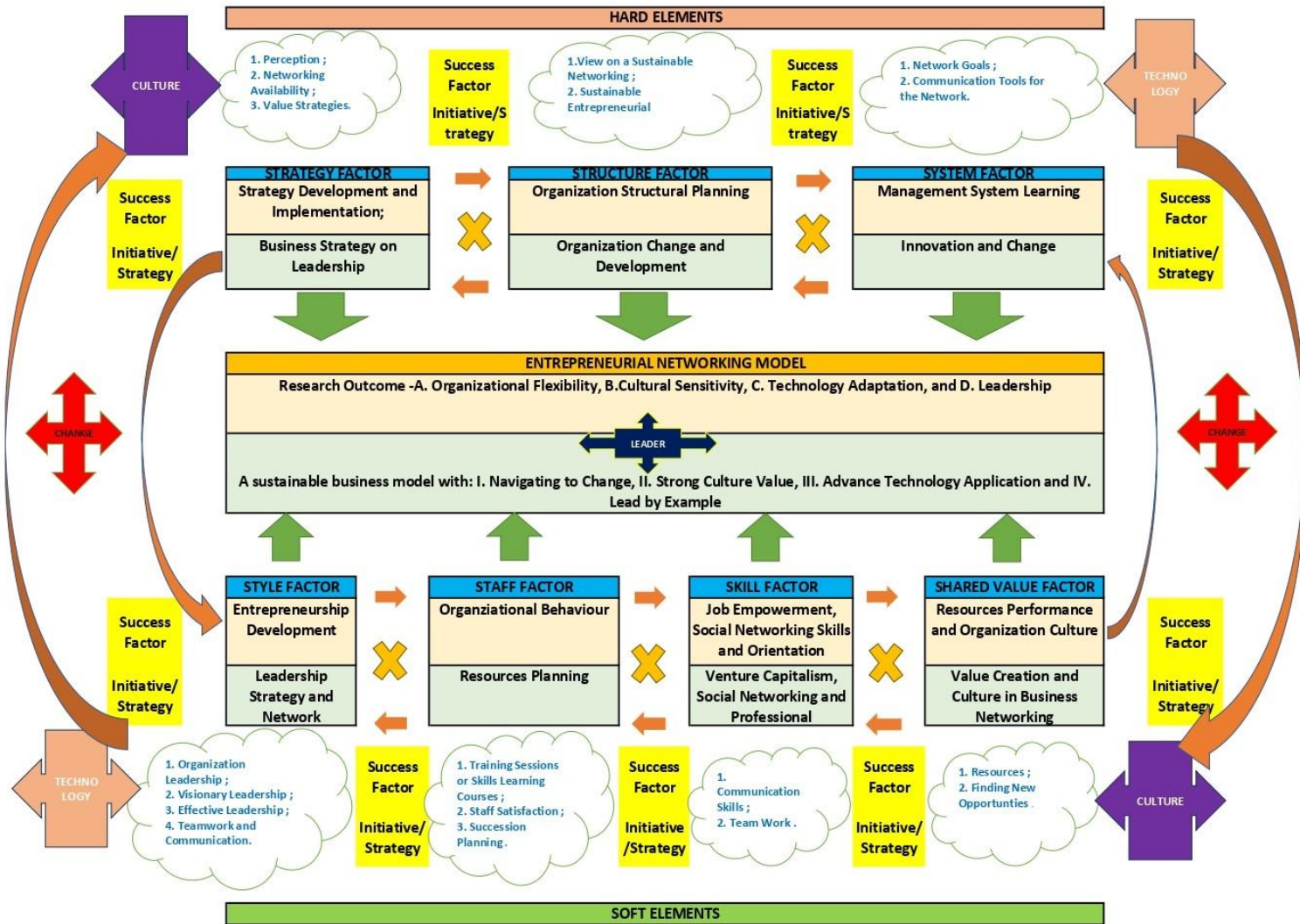


Figure: 4.9: Summary of Results: A Proposed Sustainable Entrepreneurial Networking Framework

4.7 Conclusions

The results from this study highlight the importance of entrepreneurial networking on the growth, sustainability, and competition of Malaysian SMEs. SMEs are provided with key resources, market information, and business propositions which ensure their success in the long run due to these structured networking approaches. (Findings 1 & 7)

A sustainable entrepreneurial networking model is most effective when developed on trust and collaboration with shared ethos (Finding 8). Networking success is influenced by the McKinsey 7S Framework elements: Structure, Systems, Style, Staff, Skills, Strategy, and Shared Values. An orderly framework (Finding 3) and effective management (Finding 4) are required to lead SMEs towards networking-driven growth. At the same time, staff engagement and ability to develop (Findings 5 & 6) assures active and progressive participation in the network.

Networking also acts as a primary catalyst for innovation and responsiveness among SMEs where businesses can keep up with new developments, build new collaborations, and improve brand reputation (Findings 2 & 7). This research proves that performance and resilience of SMEs can be enhanced with the implementation of structured and sustainable networking models, ensuring success in the rapidly changing business environment for the long-term.

To conclude, the study highlights that for Malaysian SMEs to achieve competitive value, they must consider the mutual benefits derived from networking and leveraging social advantages alongside the core 7S components. Hence, business entrepreneurs cannot neglect to overlook the importance of networking and its subsequent snow-ball effects.

To improve the sustainable growth of entrepreneurial activities, which benefit business owners, a substantial number of resources is required and very often, this is what SME's owners are normally lacking. Without effectively utilizing their networks, SMEs may find their growth capabilities limited and grounded. The proposed model emphasizes the need to evolve with the dynamic changes within the 7S framework, aligning with the competitive market structure, environmental factors, emerging development models, and advancements in technology and social governance across various aspects from time to time. A new "S" is born, - Shift or "Change" as the new value proposition to compliment with McKinsey's 7S model, details will be discussed in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this last chapter, the researcher explains the conclusions and recommendations that hold significance in exploring the topic of Entrepreneurial Networking Framework for Malaysian SMEs. This chapter acts as a culmination of the research providing an overview of discoveries, discussions, implications and limitations. The conclusions drawn from the study directly contribute to enhancing understanding of how the 7S Framework can be applied within the context of SMEs and to applying their entrepreneurial networking strategies.

As a result, the recommendations put forth in this concluding chapter serve as a model, in guiding actions and strategies for entrepreneurs, business leaders, policymakers and researchers alike. These tailored recommendations are designed to address various business challenges. Also, seek out opportunities that are identified during the research thereby assisting in fostering decision-making processes within the Malaysian SME's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Aligned with the theme of Entrepreneurial Networking framework, these conclusions and recommendations offer insights that can better propel growth and create competitive advantage Malaysian context.

5.2 Discussion

This chapter presented a comprehensive review of various research studies within the domain of business networking and its associated contexts, including an in-depth examination of theories relevant to business networking, similar theories, and their implications for business societies. It also encompassed recent developments from the management perspective, ensuring a thorough understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning business networking dynamics sustainably.

Furthermore, the reviews explored the contemporary landscape of business networking through analysis of wide range of research studies. This analysis aimed to identify independent variables that are crucial to the study, shedding light on the evolution of business networking practices and key variables driving networking activities and productive business outcomes. Additionally, the review encompassed an examination of research studies focused on value creation within the business networking domain. This analysis helped validate the selection of dependent variables, particularly regarding how business networking influences value creation and organizational success together with leadership factors.

Moreover, the researcher considered a variety of research works specifically related to the suitability of McKinsey's 7S model within the context of business networking. This assessment has furnished valuable insights into the practical applicability of the model and explained the choice of moderating variables, enhancing the study's relevance and ensuring a robust analytical framework for examining the interplay between business networking strategies and organizational success.

By addressing the gaps in current network theories, future entrepreneurs and networkers will be able to consult the present network model as a set of decision-making guidelines for expanding their businesses through selected networks. This approach will enable them to witness how their businesses and networks can develop in a dynamic and coherent framework. The use of robust and consistently measured parameters instils a high level of confidence in their ability to enhance business productivity, utilizing the conceptual model in a combined theoretical and practical framework for improved individual or company performance.

Several critical success factors have been identified in this chapter for their association with McKinsey's 7S model, in an effort to assess the appropriateness of a research hypotheses tailored specifically for the present study. As discussed in Chapter Four, face-to-face interviews were conducted with seasoned entrepreneurs and business professionals to improve the data quality and achieve a more profound insight into variables from the viewpoint of network actors and practitioners. This process acts as a preliminary step toward refining the research outcomes, which will undergo further evaluation to enhance the conceptual model.

The results of this research pertain to three primary theories- Actor-Network Theory, Market as Network Theory, and McKinsey 7S Model, which are crucial in the study of entrepreneurial networking among SMEs in Malaysia. The business networking structures, leadership roles, skills training and strategic cooperation which underline the sustainability of networking achievements are integrated in Malaysia SMEs performance and success at business.

a. ANT and Entrepreneurial Networking

Latour (2005) presented Actor Network Theory (ANT) in which he defined an entrepreneur's success as their network of connections, which includes peers, SMEs, exclusive groups, and public bodies as well as their collaborative activities within indicated structures: businesses, industry, national policies, and even the virtual spaces. According to ANT, networking is not limited to social relations; non-human actors, such as technologies, digital instruments, and economic regulations, take part in business results as well.

Relevance of Study Findings:

- i. Networking is resource and market expansion for entrepreneurs through formal and informal connections (Finding 1, 7).
- ii. Models of SME Networking are Structurally Adaptive Systems, which SME's utilize to respond to changes in an industry, government policy, and technology (Finding 2, 3, 8).
- iii. As small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) begin incorporating digital methods for their communication, branding, and collaboration needs, technology (which is a non-human sided actor) is gaining more importance in contemporary networking (Result 8).

Examples in Study:

- i. Respondents spoke of how leadership serves as a force for network expansion and exemplified the impact of strong leadership on networking outcomes (Finding 4).

- ii. The study shows that entrepreneurs manage business ecosystems by interacting with other stakeholders in a social network and co-branding to increase the visibility of their business (Finding 7).

Implication of ANT for Entrepreneurial Networking in Malaysian SMEs:

- i. SMEs have to reach out to different actors like clients, suppliers, investors, competitors, and regulators in order to establish strong networks.
- ii. SMEs should adopt digital networking services like LinkedIn and industry forums and also AI CRMs.
- iii. Entrepreneurs should remember that achieving successful networking relies on the combination social (trust-based) and technological (digital) interactions.

b. Market as Network Theory (MNT) and SME business growth

MNT (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995) argues that market is a web of interrelationships instead of separate dealings where collaboration, trust, and interdependence are key features of business networks. SMEs are active in market networks where they establish relations with other businesses in order to jointly produce value, promote the brand, and grow sustainably.

Relevance of Study Findings:

- i. SMEs utilize networks to gain access into the market (Finding 7). The quantitative business survey showed that through networking, respondents

are able to improve their business growth, form new partnerships, and obtain higher visibility within the industry.

- ii. Trust and reciprocity drive successful networking (Finding 2, 5). The study illustrates that SMEs participate in networking with the intent of building relationships over the long-term instead of seeking short-term profits.
- iii. Collaboration enhances competitiveness (Finding 3, 6, 7). Through networking, SMEs are able to engage in co-branding activities, knowledge and intelligence market exchanges that strengthens their competitiveness.

Examples in Study:

- i. As one respondent noted, networking serves as a means for SMEs to achieve a reputation as leaders within the industry and complements MNT's claim of trust and credibility being determinants of achieving market success.
- ii. MNT theories imply that strategic alliances, grants, joint ventures, along with market links such as BNI, Chamber of Commerce, and government correlate with easier sponsorship for the expansion of SMEs.

Implication of MNT for Entrepreneurial Networking in Malaysian SMEs:

- i. SMEs need to do more than just claim to be participants, but rather "ring-fence" themselves as valuable pillars of networking by bestowing their understanding, resources, and insights.
- ii. Digital networking, alongside group and conference participation, will enhance industry visibility and SME credibility, provided a proactive approach is taken.

- iii. Relationship sustaining micromarketing strategies like ethical business practices or simple transparent communication to encourage trust building is vital for SMEs.

c. Networking Performance s in SMEs - McKinsey 7S Model

The McKinsey 7S Framework is concerned with the internal congruence of business structures, systems, leaderships, and skills that influence the shared value and networking results of SMEs (Peters & Waterman, 1982). The research demonstrates that there is the networking performance of SMEs and how they consider the 7S components in their business processes.

Relevance of Study Findings:

McKinsey 7S Elements	Findings Alignment
Structure	Structure Networks require an organizational structure for SMEs with a framework that will allow them to network sustainably (Finding 2).
Systems	Systems efficient collaboration that meets engagement is helped by a systemized approach to networking via digital tools, set processes, and CRM systems (Finding 3).
Style	Leadership style influence the success of networking and can be expanded by having vision and being flexible facilitates strong networks (Finding 4).
Staff & Skills	Staff & Skill Employees need to be positively motivated and ensure that they can adequately network for better engagement in business networks (Finding 5, 6).
Strategy	Strategy Business network growth, so as brand image, can be achieved through strategic approaches such as advertisement in social media, partnerships, and attending or vending at trade shows (Finding 1, 7).
Shared Values	Trust, common understanding, and ethical business behavior is the foundation of sustainable business networking (Finding 8).

Examples in Study:

- i. Respondents highlighted that a systematic business networking model is paramount for long term SME sustainability which is linked the Structure and Systems elements (Finding 8).
- ii. The research indicated networking is central to leadership building and succession management, which connects to the Style and Staff sections (Finding 4, 5).

Implication of McKinsey 7S for Entrepreneurial Networking in Malaysian SMEs:

- i. SMEs need to formalize their networking processes in order to achieve constancy and long-term effects.
- ii. Embedded technology in networking systems is required for greater efficiency, scalability, and real-time engagement.
- iii. Implementing networking-oriented leadership training programs for greater collaboration is a necessary step.

d. Final Synthesis: Bridging ANT, MNT, and McKinsey 7S in SME Networking

This study has shown that combining actor relations (ANT), market cooperation (MNT), and internal structuring of business processes (McKinsey 7 S) are the core drivers to an entrepreneur's success in networking. SMEs that are able to apply and balance these three theories are able to move their networking productivity, foster trust-based partnerships, and develop sustainable ecosystems business.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT)	Networking suggests that there is an interaction between human actors (entrepreneurs and stakeholders) and non-human actors (tools and policies) that shapes SME growth.
Market as Network Theory (MNT)	SMEs utilize market based networks to co-create value, build reputation, and maintain relationships with clients.
McKinsey 7S Model	SME networking needs to be aligned within structure, leadership, strategy, skills, and shared values to guarantee sustainable progress.

Researcher’s Strategic Recommendations:

1. SME need to understand that networking is an emerging ecosystem that utilizes entrepreneurial networks through digital platforms, industry partnerships, and other forms of policy driven support (ANT).
2. Trust and reciprocity, as well as collaborative business models, form the basis of the SME’s networking success. Thus, SMEs must participate in strategic alliances and knowledge management (MNT).
3. A cultivation plan and a more formalized networking method should be built around the SME ecosystem, which guarantees its self-reinforcing sustainability in the long terms (McKinsey 7Ss).

The research highlights the significance of entrepreneurship's networking activities and its impact on an SME's growth longevity and competitiveness. The intersection of ANT, MNT, and McKinsey 7s provides a pathway towards developing structured, technologically advanced, and trust embedded networking models that enhance long-term business outcomes. The results provide practical solutions to SME owners, policymakers, and researchers regarding how to effectively enable networking and increase economic activity.

Nevertheless, the core of the research illustration sought to analyze these three theories: Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Market as Network Theory (MNT), and the McKinsey 7S Framework in order to understand entrepreneurial networking of Malaysian SMEs. ANT

and MNT theories provide useful references regarding the interactions and relationships within a network; however, they do not present a practical framework that can be used by SMEs to assess and improve their networking practices. The McKinsey 7S framework was adopted in the study because it is more comprehensive, cohesive, and systemic in evaluating one's networking productivity relative to the organizational objectives.

Their reasoning follows closely to the 7S McKinsey framework which puts forth that strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills and shared values are essential factors for success in entrepreneurial networking. According to premise of networking within SMEs, it has noted that although a large number of SMEs participate in both formal and informal networking, absence of defined networking paradigms prevents them from fully capitalizing on their networks. Entrepreneurial networking is crucial for the growth and sustainability of SMEs as it supports business development, brand recognition, industry information exchange and relationships of confidence among stakeholders. From McKinsey's 7S lens, it becomes obvious that having a defined structure, an organization's operational protocols, appropriate leadership, active employees, and shared ethos all enhance sustaining networking models that promote performance and innovation.

Qualitative data from interview questions offered answers relating to the importance of networking strategies in combination with sustainable networking structures, leadership styles, staff motivation, transferrable skills, value creation, and sustainability models that make an SME successful. SMEs that have proactive business models that incorporate industry and networking initiatives are more likely to do well in overcoming barriers to trade, establishing strategic partnerships, and retaining competitiveness in the industry. The sustainable business networking model will always give precedence to trustworthy

relationships, mutual benefits, ethical values and their sustained application for effective networking success.

McKinsey 7S was preferred to ANT and MNT because it provides a structured and coherent framework that takes into account both the internal and external factors of the business and diuses positively towards strengthening the networking performance of SMEs. In the case of ANT which offers some chance for actor interaction, it lacks any systematic evaluative framework. On the other hand, MNT puts an emphasis on market relationship but does not offer an incremental model of improvement that can be followed. In comparison, McKinsey 7S framework offers SMEs a clear and simple holistic conceptualization of how to develop, implement and maintain their networking strategies. It enables SMEs to integrate their networking initiatives with the strategic objectives of the firms which promotes long-term sustainability. Thus the study firmly believes that McKinsey 7S has the best value in understanding and improving the entrepreneurial networking of SMEs in Malaysia. It is comprehensive and very useful in practice.

5.3 Discussion on Recapitulation of Study (Summary of Findings)

The results of this study greatly enhance understanding of the role that entrepreneurial networking plays in the advancement and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs. The analysis of networking strategies, organizational designs, leadership approaches, employee motivation, skill mobility, value-added processes, and sustainable networking models provide a complete paradigm within the context of the McKinsey 7S Framework, which aims to assist SMEs in formulating strategic, structured, and sustainable networking paradigms.

Key Summary and Their Alignment with Research Objectives and Questions:

Research Objectives	Research Questions
RO1.To explore the current status and practices of entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs.	RQ1. What is the current status of entrepreneurial networking among SMEs in Malaysia?
RO2.To investigate the importance of entrepreneurial networking for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs.	RQ2. Why is entrepreneurial networking important for the growth and sustainability of Malaysian SMEs?
RO3. To examine how the elements of the McKinsey 7S Framework are applied in entrepreneurial networking and to identify the most critical elements influencing SME performance.	RQ3.How are the elements of McKinsey's 7S Framework applied in entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs, and which elements are the most significant for fostering performance and innovation?

1. Current Status and Practices of Entrepreneurial Networking Among Malaysian SMEs (RQ1, RO1)

The findings of this study suggest that entrepreneurial networking is practiced by most of Malaysian SMEs, as companies use both formal and informal methods to build trust-based networks with stakeholders (Interview Q1). Networking provides access to resources, cooperation, and alliances, which SMEs need to enhance their relevance in the market over time. Nevertheless, many SMEs do not have a defined networking framework, which hampers the effective use of business networks and may impact competition sustainability adversely.

2. Importance of Entrepreneurial Networking for SME Growth and Sustainability (RQ2, RO2)

Entrepreneurial networking is one of the most significant factors that contributes to the growth and sustainability of SMEs, as it provides access to new business opportunities, industry knowledge, customers, and market intelligence (Interview

Q7). Networking enhances brand visibility, credibility, and trust, enabling the SMEs to expand to other regions and overseas. The creation of value in business networking goes beyond individual firms, aiding self-reinforcing entrepreneurial ecosystems for enhanced business innovation and resilience.

3. Applying McKinsey 7S Framework in Entrepreneurial Networking in Malaysian SMEs (RQ3, RO3)

The 7S McKinsey Framework allows analysis of the networking performance by looking into the structure, systems, style, staff, skills, strategy and shared values that must be present for the success of the SME networking. The results from the interviews conducted in the study complies with this framework in the following way:

- **Structure (Interview Q2):** An entrepreneurial networking organization is sustainable when it has a clear defined structure that encourages collaboration, knowledge sharing, and trust amongst users SMEs are better served through networking in structured models that provide institutional continuity, stability, and strategic direction.
- **Systems (Interview Q3):** A systematic approach to networking that employs standardized procedures, digital tools, and goal-oriented networking enhances the efficiency, consistency, and success of SMEs in the long term.
- **Style (Interview Q4):** Leadership is a very important aspect of entrepreneurial networking, especially in the case of visionary, changeable and transformational leadership. Changed, inclusive and open leaders strengthen their networks and enhance organizational performance.
- **Staff and Skills (Interview Q5 & Q6):** Motivation and developed skills of employees are very important in networking environments. Focus on employee

training, inter-departmental collaboration, and staff engagement relations positively with productivity and retention of staff for a prolonged duration.

- **Strategy (Interview Q1 & Q7):** SMEs need to incorporate strategic networking approaches which relate to value creation, business growth, and sustenance. Successful networking strategies rely on purposeful participation at trade shows, use of social media, and formation of joint ventures.

- **Shared Values (Interview Q8):** A Sustainable Business Networking Model focuses on ethical business conduct, common goals, and enduring relationships that are constituents of sustainable development. Sustainable relationships based on respect, trust, and sustainability enhance social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.

Malaysian SMEs are presented with an integrated Entrepreneurial Networking Framework which combines the formal and informal networking strategies within the McKinsey 7S Framework for Seamless business operations and growth. Through the implementation of networking approaches, cultivating strong leadership, increasing employee involvement, and encouraging common values, SMEs are able to construct resilient networks which support sustained economic performance.

Discussion: Comparison of Results with Research Objectives and Questions

This study demonstrates that there is strong evidence of the importance of entrepreneurial networking for the growth, sustainability, and performance of Malaysian SMEs. Sustain SME aims were achieved by identifying the existing level of networking, its effects, and the roles of networking within the McKinsey 7S Framework. The findings also respond to the research questions by explaining how networking is organized, its importance, and the major factors that make it important.

a. Connecting with Research Objective 1: Entrepreneurial Networking Practices of Malaysian SMEs

The first objective seeks to understand the networking practices of SMEs in Malaysia. The purpose of this study was to determine whether Malaysian SMEs use formal or informal networking and how they benefit from it. It was discovered that SMEs implement both formal and informal networking strategies for social capital formation, trust building, and collaboration (Finding 1). Entrepreneurs use a formal social network system referred to as structured network and also informal social networks to build reputation, contribute to the sharing of information, and to acquire different business opportunities (Finding 7).

Connection to RQ1:

- Interview Question 1 looks at the approaches SMEs use to network and it captures the link of social networks and structured networking models.
- Interview Question 7 explored value creation using networks, showing that networking generates business visibility, strengthens the competitive advantage, and fosters business sustainability for the longer term.

b. Connecting with Research Objective 2: Consider the Impact of Entrepreneurial Networking on SME Growth and Sustainability.

The second objective addresses the reason networking is important for SMEs. The research captures that networking is essential for SMEs to remain current with industry developments, gather business intelligence, and increase market penetration (Finding 7). Entrepreneurs leverage networks to obtain critical resources, create important alliances, and promote business competitiveness. In addition, an

effective sustainable business networking model promotes the growth of SMEs by incorporating shared values and cooperation among constituents (Finding 8).

Connection with RQ2:

- Interview Question 7 targets the value created by networking and shows how SMEs utilize networking for sustainable growth, innovation, and competitive advantage positioning.
- Interview question 8 deepens this understanding by exploring how the Sustainable Business Networking Model enables SME resilience and long-term business success.

c. Connecting with Research Objective 3: The Use of McKinsey's 7S Framework in Entrepreneurial Networking

The third objective looks into the application of the McKinsey 7S elements—Structure, Systems, Style, Staff, Skills, Strategy, and Shared Values—in entrepreneurial networking contexts. The results of the study verified that the different elements of the framework have considerable impact on networking success:

1. **Structure:** Networking for SMEs should be organized within a formal structure in order to ensure sustainability and collaboration (Finding 2).
 - That is covered in Interview Question 2, which looks at what the ideal organizational structure for sustainable networking is.
2. **Systems:** Networking in SMEs, when approached in a systematic manner with processes and strategies in place, leads to better performance (Finding 3).

- This is covered by Interview Question 3, which looks at how structured systems improve networking effectiveness.
3. **Style:** The success or failure of networking organizations is determined by the leadership style adopted (Finding 4).
- Interview Question 4 seeks to understand the impacts of various leadership activities on organizational networking outcomes, focusing on trust, motivation, and vision development.
4. **Staff & Skills:** Motivation and engagement of employees plays a big part in SME networking success (Findings 5 & 6).
- Interview Question 5 seeks to understand how staff participation and motivation helps organizations network.
 - Interview Question 6 taps into the discussion of how networking leads to skill acquisition and its contribution to the growth of SMEs.
5. **Shared Values & Strategy:** An effective sustainable business networking model relies on SMEs integrating the strategies with shared values for achieving long-term business success (Finding 8).
- The Interview Question 8 tackles directly how a structured business networking model operates, which includes shared values, co-branding, and strategic alliances.

The results of this study offer a useful contribution to the understanding of the influence entrepreneurial networking has on the performance of SMEs. The coherence between the research objectives, research questions, and the interviews' findings depicts the

contribution of networking strategies, leadership, skills development, and sustainability models towards the success of SMEs. With the application of the McKinsey 7S Framework within entrepreneurial networking, SMEs are able to improve networked relations, foster creativity, and enhance sustainability in the future. The study demonstrates the need of structured, trustful and strategic networking approaches to help SMEs adapt to changes and challenges within the Malaysian business environment.

The first findings were based on the Research Question One, revealing that respondents perceived network strategies to be vitally important, and almost all respondents agreed that social connections and networks are crucial in entrepreneurial networking framework. They stressed the importance of robust social ties with stakeholders, enhancing trust, performance, and access to opportunities. Notably, Quoted from P3 respondent (Mr. Andrew W):

".....we may have more information which is helping us a lot. And besides that, we are also the Malaysia International Chamber of Commerce member, which they share a lot of the whole Malaysia industry development and its information, and what is happening, and what's hot in certain kind of industry. So from there we can pick up some information which is quite helpful for us. Due to we are a general contractor, we may require this kind of info when we meet up with related industry players" (P3)

Entrepreneurship is often portrayed as strongly connected to interactions, underscoring the importance of fostering relationships, within the entrepreneurial community. Building connections within networks is crucial for achieving success in entrepreneurship necessitating consistent dedication and growth. The respondents also pointed out the skills in entrepreneurial circles providing valuable insights for maneuvering through these networks. In essence, they emphasized the evolving and

interlinked characteristics of networks that fuel progress, creativity and collaborative prospects, with significant outcomes.

The second findings were based on Research Question Two. The respondents revealed that development of a sustainable entrepreneurial networking organization required essential strategies for maintaining sustainable business relationships and effective networking. Trust is a central theme, crucial for enduring partnerships with clients and employees, as noted in quote from the respondent P5 (Mr. Terry L.).

"I think the core value, which should be trust, you know, whatever we do is genuine and it's the members or people who come, it's in their interest" (P5)

Another key aspect is the importance of support, active listening, and empathy in fostering strong relationships, as emphasized by respondent, P14 (Dr. Patrick G).

"Yes, I think listening is very important and building trust." (P14)

Strategic networking involves setting clear goals and engaging diverse stakeholders like customers, suppliers, employees, investors, peers, or competitors, as suggested in one quote. This strategic approach is vital for achieving sustainability objectives and promoting collaboration across sectors. Consistent engagement and recognition are also crucial in the sustainability journey, was specifically mentioned by some respondents as noted in respondent, number P4 by Mr. Johnson L,

"I believe with more structures and also sustainable elements, that is how we push forward circuits on all these entrepreneurships." (P4)

He emphasizes the collective effort needed for sustainable practices. Additionally, effective communication is essential for networking success, utilizing various channels like emails, newsletters, webinars, podcasts, blogs, social media, events, or meetings, as articulated spontaneously by many respondents, for example highlighted by respondent, number P13 (Mr. KL. K). Additionally, nurturing network relationships through active listening, giving full attention, and following up on conversations is pivotal for building trust, loyalty, and collaboration within sustainable business networks, contributing to long-term success and resilience.

"Even they tried to help me to push the business through a lot of social media. This is helping me to save a lot of time on the F&B marketing". (P13)

The third findings were based on Research Question Three, revealing that developing a systematic approach to entrepreneurial networking can be immensely helpful for Malaysian SMEs. Many respondents offered valuable insights into organizational management and leadership within the context of entrepreneurial networking framework for Malaysian SMEs. One respondent often praised JMBA's structured approach and operational efficiency, he proclaimed that it is essential for navigating entrepreneurial networking complexities. Another respondent emphasized the strategic importance of building strong ties with government and professional bodies, it is equally vital for enhancing organizational relationships and leveraging collaborative opportunities to expand market presence.

Additionally, commendable leadership attributes, such as goal setting and driving the organizational agenda, were singled out by another respondent, he using BNI as example of the critical role effective leadership plays in achieving objectives within an entrepreneurial networking framework. Moreover, exemplary leadership behavior is shown to motivate employees toward collective organizational interests, fostering unity and commitment is crucial for SMEs in competitive markets like Malaysia. Nevertheless, a cautionary note was sounded and as quoted in respondent P8 (Dr. Kong) about the repercussions of inconsistencies between organizational values and actions, stressing the need for alignment to avoid hindrances in successful organizational change efforts which can be a failure if handle inappropriately.

"for the leadership is, I think recently, I think in the last few years, I learned the word dynamic, change. I think the leader must be able to change. Sometimes, you know, he may have changed to the extent that even his colleagues who have been following him for years would no longer recognize him. Of course, you know to change for better. And to change for better in terms of the orientation, in terms of the method of looking and all that." (P8)

The fourth findings were based on Research Question Four, which revealed that cultivating the essence of leadership is of utmost importance to any organization. The respondent statements collectively highlighted the crucial role leadership plays in achieving organizational success and managing change effectively. One respondent emphasized the need for strategic leadership to achieve business objectives, ensure organizational sustainability, and stimulate growth through effective resource allocation, alignment, and team motivation as quoted in respondent P12 (Mr. BC).

“the leader must have influence to others.... Yes, so he needs to be somewhat influential to really influence the rest of the people to follow his direction the strategy that's been said to work towards it.” (P12)

Competent leadership is underscored in managing organizational change, with leaders acting as change agents capable of steering the organization towards success. Additionally, the importance of capable leadership in addressing organizational change, optimizing structures, and devising effective strategies was stressed by many respondents. Moreover, as highlighted in the interview, visionary leadership is crucial in guiding organizational change efforts, aligning actions, and inspiring collective commitment to common goals, a few respondents who participated in BNI stressed the success of their strong Vision and Mission. Moreover, leveraging digital technologies for enhanced organizational efficiency was discussed, alongside essential leadership skills such as change management, effective communication, transparency, teamwork facilitation, and vision communication.

Organizational change is a key fundamental for Malaysian SMEs entrepreneurial networking framework effectively, where enabling entrepreneur's adaptation to market trends, technological advancements, and assist them in economic shifts for a competitive edge and long-term success that were already highlighted. It is a point worthy to note that effective leadership in entrepreneurial networking within Malaysian SMEs involves steering through change, fostering relationship, innovation to change, and more importantly aligning the workforce with achievable strategic goals. Thus, proactive and agile leadership is deemed necessary for successful organizational change, including formulating and executing initiatives, effective communication, and creating an inclusive environment that encourages participation and idea brain-storming. The respondents collectively emphasized that effective leadership and organizational change are essential for entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs. These factors

play a critical role in fostering innovation, resilience, and adaptability within the competitive market environment. Notably as highlighted by respondent P8 (Dr. Kong).

"Sometimes I think we have to change to the extent that sometimes we, the people beside us may not know. And sometimes we also don't realize that we have changed." (P8)

The findings, from Research Question Five showed that respondents value training and development programs are their strategic approaches to enhance employee performance and job satisfaction. They emphasized the importance of motivating employees through training initiatives, such as skill building workshops like attending one particular or specify seminar, training program in specialized software courses like Excel and etc. This continuous learning approach is essential in the context of networking and is practicable for all organizations who participated in the interview. Additionally, many respondents also highlighted the significance of education and training in assisting their employees adapt to changes, which is aligning with the nature of entrepreneurial networking that necessitates organizational or individual's adaptability and a willingness to learn. Ultimately, adapting this strategy will benefit the company in the long run.

Furthermore, training and development plays an important role in facilitating organizational change by providing employees with the necessary tool and knowledge with the appropriate platforms to embrace new initiatives thereby enhancing organizational agility and responsiveness to address business challenges. The link between employee satisfaction, productivity and loyalty was clearly articulated, as engaged and motivated employees actively contribute to business objectives. More importantly, they remain dedicated to the company's vision and mission. This employer-employee relationship is particularly relevant in networking, where motivated

employees play their roles in encouraging ventures collaboration which could drive innovation and fostering growth with a quantum leap effortlessly.

Nevertheless, the importance of implementation in a good reward and incentive system, this will boost employee happiness and drive to success. It was noted that acknowledging and rewarding their performing staff members through a regular social gathering or providing opportunities for growth can foster a positive workplace atmosphere. All these elements discussed are supporting entrepreneurial networking endeavors. One respondent, P11 (Miss KV) emphasized the significance of training, within networking contexts.

"It's like a condensed training in such a short time that probably you get to learn, I mean if you go to college you maybe need to spend 3 to 4 years to learn about business and then to learn about marketing. But today we can't afford the time, that's why we go to the business networking session like this to learn something quick and then straight to the point that we can implement in our own businesses and then to see like the real story and case study that like people who face a similar problem like us." (P11)

The results of Research Question Six showed that respondents acquired skills related to networking. They emphasized the importance of skills and teamwork in achieving success in business. One respondent highlighted the significance of communication skills mentioning that employees who excel in communication can apply these skills to roles within the organization, which's crucial in entrepreneurial networking where individuals often handle diverse responsibilities and collaborate across different areas. While another respondent stressed the role of communication for entrepreneurs especially when engaging with clients, investors, partners and employees.

Effective communication impacts the outcomes of these interactions contributing to business growth and relationship building. Aligning with the core of networking that relies on communication for establishing and nurturing professional connections. Additionally, strong interpersonal skills and active listening were identified as vital for developing relationships within a networking context where establishing rapport and trust with stakeholders is essential for achieving business goals while accessing business opportunities. Moreover, the collaborative nature of business endeavors was underscored, emphasizing the importance of teamwork in company success. This resonates with the concept of networking where collaboration among team members, partners and stakeholders fosters creativity in innovation, organizational efficiency and hence generate better productivity.

One of the feedbacks gained from the respondent highlighted how important transferable skills, communication, teamwork and relationship building are in shaping networking for SMEs in Malaysia. P5, (Mr. Rick) made the following statement.

"So they come out learning something and that's useful, you know, or management style or offer them how to use a new software that would streamline communication within the company" (P5).

The findings from Research Question Seven revealed that various fundamental factors such as shared values formed the essence of the entire entrepreneurial networking process. The respondents highlighted the diverse benefits of networking for entrepreneurs for academic purposes. Firstly, networking provided valuable insights and perspectives that aided in timely informed decision-making for business growth, allowing entrepreneurs to access knowledge and experiences are crucial for strategic planning and execution. Secondly, networking helped respondents build a strong personal brand image and enhance their industry visibility. So the entrepreneurs were

able to be established as authoritative figures through active networking and sharing expertise, with this in boosting their credibility and reputation.

Furthermore, networking created opportunities for growth and expansion, enabling entrepreneurs to discover new opportunities, forge partnerships, secure investments, and gain mentorship essential for scaling their businesses. Additionally, networking kept entrepreneurs updated on industry trends and developments, ensuring competitiveness and innovation by adapting strategies and offerings in line with market shifts. Overall, networking played a crucial role in fostering business success and facilitating professional growth. Notably, quoted by P6 (Mr. Teng) for the following statement on creating visibility and being actively involved in a voluntary organization.

"Because I myself is representing my company at this all-entrepreneur networking. So also, I need to get the important chances that to perform voluntary serving to the organizations by being actively participate to the organization. So in this case, all these together three, I will say visibility, credibility, and as well as my active and positive participation to the group can be somehow as my overall strategy for business networking, entrepreneurship networking." (P6)

The findings, from Research Question Eight imply that a business networking model employs strategies to achieve business growth effectively. The diverse perspectives shared by respondents shed light on management and leadership dynamics. One respondent emphasized the significance of acknowledging differences and employing approaches in managing organizations to cater to diverse situations effectively. Another respondent discussed about the evolution of management practices particularly focusing on the prevalence of methods in Japanese contexts.

However, with the integration of Industry 4.0 technologies like robotics there is a necessity to adjust approaches to align with advancements and industry shifts. Moreover, the crucial role of leadership in steering through change is highlighted, underscoring the importance of leadership and change management skills in propelling success and resilience. These insights collectively enhance our understanding of management and leadership dynamics by emphasizing the importance of flexibility adaptation to changes and effective change management strategies for sustainable growth in entrepreneurial networking. Notably as highlighted by P8 (Dr. Kong) this business model may not be familiar to everyone; least many SME owners did not have models when they started their businesses. This what makes this research study a viable model for entrepreneurs and business owners at earlier stage in business development.

"I started my business in 2006. I started my business in 2006. It was a hard journey. And not many people were looking up, you know, at our business. There's no business model, there's no business framework, there's no business practice. I think what is built upon is what we believe on. And this belief continues to build the legacy until today." (P8)

On top of that, the term "Shift" or "Change" as an additional component of the McKinsey 7S Framework also marks a new milestone in theory and practice concerning entrepreneurial networking for Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The classic uses of the 7S Framework, which includes Strategy, Structure, Systems, Staff, Skills, Style, and Shared Values, While serving as an excellent model for internal alignment, do not integrate fully the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is perpetually in motion and requires flexibility. The results of this research indicate that change is no longer a covert factor of the framework, but rather a determinant factor that independently influences the business networks' contexts and the sustainability of SMEs in the long term.

Reasons for Justifying “Shift” or “Change” to 7S Model:

Networking in entrepreneurship is sustained in conditions of ambiguity and swift movement in the markets, and evolution of business relations is an ongoing process. Innovation and change often influence energies that have an impact on SMEs so that business processes are structured in a very flexible manner in response to the macro environment, which includes, for example, technological change, legislative change, changes in consumer habits, and changes in the industry. The addition of “Shift” or “Change” openly speaks to this reality and positions it as a core competency that must be mastered by SMEs to compete.

The analysis uncovered some important aspects of the Shift/Change concept, suggesting that it serves as a core direction of networking efficiency and SME resilience. These are marked below.

1. Dynamic Strategy Adaptation (Interview Q1 & Q7)

SMEs actively networked for market information, industry developments, and business opportunities (Finding 7). Yet, in the absence of a dynamic strategy, even the finest networking relationships will not result in profitable business ventures and success. Change as a known principle allows the firm not only to state strategic objectives for an extended period, but also to be proactive in relation to many opportunities and threats which may arise.

2. Flexible Organizational Structure for Sustainable Networks (Interview Q2)

Research results show that highly structured organization is not conducive to the growth of entrepreneurial networks (Finding 2). The Shift or Change simply brings

into focus the importance of flexible modular structures which are necessary for dynamic SMEs.

3. Systems Innovation in Entrepreneurial Networking (Interview Q3)

Systematic networking processes (Finding 3) provide sustainability and efficiency, but without the possibility to transform the system according to external market requirements, SMEs are likely to stagnate. The transformation of traditional networking into digital networks, the introduction of AI-driven CRM systems, automation, and the use of data analytics has and will continue to change the way SMEs interact with their networks. The addition of "Shift" requires SMEs to mobilize and integrate these new systems.

4. Adapting Leadership Styles for Networking (Interview Q4)

Leadership (Finding 4) was and is instrumental in the implementation of networking, and today and entrepreneurial leaders need to adopt "Change Leadership" as one of their functional competencies. Visionary leadership on its own is not enough. It becomes necessary for the leader to exercise adaptive leadership who moves the networks in constant change while being able to build trust, collaboration and creative culture.

5. Agility of the Workforce and Networking Skills (Interview Q5 and Q6)

Networking success depends on the presence of fully skilled and motivated personnel (Findings 5 and 6). Nonetheless, the skills learned today may not be adequate tomorrow. SMEs need to implement a philosophy of learning, upskilling,

and adjusting the workforce to ensure sustained effectiveness of employees as network participants.

6. Changes in Network Business Values (Interview Q8)

Trust and long-term collaboration in entrepreneurial networks are grounded on shared values (Finding 8). But shared values are not constant. They are subject to change due to cultural, economic, and technological conditions. The addition of Shift as another “S” in the model suggests that networking values require constant review and new definitions to fit the fast-evolving business and societal needs.

Shifts for Malaysian SMEs Impacts of this change are quite notable with Malaysian SMEs. Shift is a new entrepreneurial mindset of continual change and improvement. This identifies the changes that companies need to make in order to stay relevant and to gain competitive edge in networking. This is very pertinent for the SME sector in Malaysia because of the:

- Heightened Digitalization: SMEs are required to change their networking approach to depend more on digital, automated, and AI powered processes.
- Change in Government Policies: Adapting to and taking advantage of changing government supports and policies are essential skills for survival for SMEs.
- Global Network Integration: Malaysian SMEs need to move beyond local networking approaches to regional and global networking for greater access to opportunities.
- Business Resilience and Crisis Response: The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, proved the importance of having businesses that can quickly switch

operational strategies on to off to sustain the business through all types of interruptions.

The McKinsey 7S model's "Shift" is added as the eighth part in this framework 8S tailored for entrepreneurial networking in SMEs. This new framework recognizes that strategic agility, digital transformation, leadership change, and workforce resilience are vital for sustainable networking success. While the 7S model has always been helpful in achieving internal alignment, the addition of Shift/Change makes it applicable to the current turbulent, technology-focused marketplace. It affords Malaysian SMEs a more systematic, yet flexible model for entrepreneurial networking.

The research seeks to demonstrate the role of networking in SMEs while assessing how the 7S Framework helps improve networking strategies, business collaboration, innovation, and competitiveness. Analyze the impact these elements have in defining networking behaviors and the possible outcomes to the sustainability of SMEs in the long run. This study tries to answer the question of what is needed in entrepreneurial networking and what can be done about it to provide guidance and policy recommendations for Malaysian entrepreneurs on how to adopt the 7S Framework in a manner that facilitates sustainable growth of businesses.

The purpose of the research questions was to explore the relevance and existing structural use of networking in Malaysian SMEs. The overarching framework of objectives and questions formed the basis for the analysis of the eight interview questions:

1. Networking Strategies and Value Creation (RQ1) - Looked at how SMEs use networking strategies to create value.
2. Sustainable Networking Structure (RQ3) - Looked at how SMEs design their networking organizations to ensure longevity.
3. Systematic Entrepreneurial Networking (RQ3) – Explored the influence of organized networking frameworks on SME advancement.
4. Leadership in Business Networking (RQ3) – Explored the relationship between leadership styles and success in networking.
5. Employee Motivation in Networking (RQ3) – Focused on how organizational networks motivate their employees, which blends employee participation and employee training.
6. Transferable Skills in Networking (RQ3) – Discovered skills that pertain to networking and their relevance to other functions within the business.
7. Value Creation Through Networking (RQ2) – Evaluated the role of networking in the growth of SMEs and how it aids in their competitive edge.
8. Sustainable Business Networking Model (RQ3) – Investigated the impact of sustainable networking frameworks on the development and maintenance of business relationships and collaboration.

One of the primary problems among Malaysian SMEs is the lack of structured networking systems, despite the emerging benefits of business networking (Misner, 2017; Ogbe & Orodriyo, 2018). The Disruptive Industry 4.0 framework and technological developments have transformed traditional networking means and require new more efficient and flexible networking frameworks (Rahman et al., 2023). This study addresses the gap by combining fragmentation on network diversity, knowledge dissemination and resource-sharing into an integrated networking model. Literature view the

integration of networks as a vital element in the creation of trust, credibility and business development (Mustafa et al., 2021). Still, numerous researches fail to incorporate the obstacles to effective resource-sharing and the need of fully developed networking systems in SMEs (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Rahman et al., 2023).

In Malaysia, SMEs serve as essential engines of economic growth and have a noteworthy effect on employment generation and the growth of the country (Gyimah, Owiredu & Antwi, 2020; Liew, 2020). Many SMEs face sustainability challenges, which stems from unbalanced strategic networking models, despite their apparent potential (Perera, 2016; Lim & Teoh, 2021). Research has pointed out the importance of effective strategic planning to address the business failures and ensure a higher grade of sustained success (Kaur, 2017). This study aims to build SME resilience through more effective structured networking within the context of McKinsey's 7S framework.

From the analysis of Delmar and Shane (2003), Daft (2012), Lim and Teoh (2021), it can be summarized that strategic networking improves business development, risk management, and competitive advantages. Wang, Walker, and Redmond (2011) and Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) emphasized the importance of social networking for SMEs as they need to be proactive and responsive in constantly changing business environments. In this regard, it is imperative that SMEs modify their networking strategies to remain competitive amidst rapid changes in business practices.

The results indicate the relevance of McKinsey's 7S Framework on entrepreneurial networking as it associates each of the elements with networking outcomes:

- Structure (Interview Q2, RQ3): SMEs have well-defined networking structures which aid collaboration, trust, and strategic purpose that they want to achieve.
- Systems (Interview Q3, RQ3): Networking is done in an orderly manner which improves effectiveness and success in the long term.
- Style (Interview Q4, RQ3): Different styles of leadership affect the effectiveness of networking, especially those of transformational and visionary leaders.
- Staff and Skills (Interview Q5 & Q6, RQ3): Employees' willingness and ability to be trained is important for effective networking.
- Strategy (Interview Q1 & Q7, RQ1 & RQ2): SMEs need to engage in networking at a strategic level to achieve business objectives and add value over time.
- Shared Values (Interview Q8, RQ3): Ethical conduct and relationship building are the primary focuses of sustainable networking models.

The results of this study fit well with modern theories of business networking including the Actor-network Theory (ANT) and Market as Network Theory (MNT). ANT looks at the multi-faceted functions that actors perform in a network, and MNT examines how a market is networked. Nonetheless, there is little empirical guidance to help SMEs make use of these theories. The researcher chose McKinsey's 7S model because it is practical, offers a clear plan, and accounts for both internal and external networking. Unlike ANT, which centers on relational interactions with no clear implementation plan, and MNT, which focuses on external organizational relationships without providing a means to optimize internal networks, the 7S model offers concrete, realistic, and measurable strategies through which SMEs can improve their networking and business performance.

The research results provide new perspectives for entrepreneurs and policymakers, as well as practitioners in the industry by advocating for defined networking frameworks,

adoption of digital networking, leadership training, and networking with a focus on sustainability. Utilizing McKinsey's 7S Framework, SMEs can better define networking plans, foster enduring relationships, and achieve sustainable business objectives, bolstering their ability to withstand challenges in the ever-changing business environment.

5.4 Contributions of the Study

5.4.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study offers novel theoretical contributions. In addition to the McKinsey 7S Framework, this study incorporates two other network theories: Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Market-as-Network Theory (MNT). ANT and MNT have quite useful insights on the design, change, and impact of business networks especially in the context of SMEs. With these theories and the empirical findings from research questions 1-8, this study seeks to provide an additional explanation on entrepreneurial networking in Malaysian SMEs.

Theoretical Contribution to Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

This contributes to the field of ANT by arguing that human and non-human actors, including technologies, policies, and markets are functions of the networks which they hope to shape (Latour, 2005). This study's central ANT contribution is illustrating how network entrepreneurs such as self-employed business owners, employees, business organizations, information and communication technology (ICT), and government policies interact to create and maintain entrepreneurial networks.

While the study demonstrates networking by SMEs, it is important to emphasize that entrepreneurial networking goes beyond human interactivity; it encompasses the deployment of digital devices, organized systems, and social institutions which a small and medium enterprise can use for enhanced business networking. For example:

1. **Technology as a Non-Human Actor** (Finding 3) – The study shows how SME businesses use systematic networking enabled by customer relationship management and AI business networking applications and digital networking that are available on the Internet. This directly supports ANT's claim that technology impacts the formation of networks by facilitating interactions and thus, technology is a vital component of contemporary entrepreneurial networks.
2. **Government and Industry Policies as Mediators** (Finding 7) – The findings suggest that government bodies, regulatory policies, and industry bodies act as major barriers to how SMEs network and access resources. This is in line with ANT's assertion that networks are shaped through the actions of intervening actors, in this case, determines how SMEs relate to the market.
3. **Network Stability through Actor Interdependencies** (Findings 2 and 8) – The study shows that SMEs which operate in organized networking such as BNI, chambers of commerce or professional trade associations have stronger interdependencies among actors, which supports ANT's proposition that network stability stems from the relationships among actors within an ecosystem.

Using ANT, this study further clarifies how SME networking is studied as a system of actors using SME networking with technology as human and institutional boundaries that define business networking. Contrary to dominant approaches of studying SMEs that emphasize networking as an outcome, this study integrates technology and regulative frameworks as players in the entrepreneurial networking process, thus, changing the conception of how SMEs networks are studied.

Theoretical Contribution to Market-as-Network Theory (MNT)

According to the Market-as-Network Theory, the market consists of multifaceted relationships interwoven into a web that maintains a continuous flow of engagement among enterprises, suppliers, clientele, rivals, and other institutions (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995). This study's contribution to MNT is underscored by its focus on the influence of structured networking models on the achievement of sustained SME growth and market positioning. For example,

1. **Entrepreneurial Networking as a Market Strategy** (Finding 1) – The study illustrates that SMEs formulate both formal and informal networks to obtain market information, enter new markets, and establish new partnerships. This helps demonstrate that MNT is not only about competitive advantage, but also about market positioning as the outcome of relationship building within business networks over time.
2. **Trust and Value Exchange as Market Enablers** (Finding 7) – Findings show that entrepreneurial networks create additional trust, visibility, and brand credibility, which reinforces MNT's argument that markets are not merely transactional but rather a relational system where long-term trust-building leads to business sustainability.
3. **Collaborative Networks as Competitive Tools** (Finding 4) – The study shows that SMEs that adopt a leader-directed networking strategy where entrepreneurs undertake industry-wide collaboration, joint ventures, and co-branding have an easier access to market competition. This adds to MNT's argument that market formation is the outcome of strategic inter-firm relationships rather than firm-level decisions made in isolation.
4. **The Role of Knowledge and Innovation Sharing** (Finding 6) – The study also supports MNT in the context of market transformation through knowledge and

innovation diffusion. SMEs that engage in networking have access to industry leading and emerging technological skills and practices, which improves their response to market changes.

By making a contribution to MNT, the research helps to understand how SMEs employ structured networking for widening market horizons, improving competitive market standing, and fostering business enterprises. This research goes beyond the traditional approach of treating SME networking as informal or social interaction and shows that entrepreneurial networking is a systematic, strategic process of building a market, from which a competitive edge is gained through business engagement over time.

Theoretical Contribution to McKinsey's 7S Framework

The McKinsey 7S Framework operates as an intricate organizational diagnostic model that assesses the impacts of the seven constituent. These include strategy, structure, systems, skills, stuff, style, and shared values on the business performance. This research broadens the conceptual scope of the 7S model by focusing on the sustainable business networking and growth in the context of entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs. The research results (1-8) help in the enrichment of an entrepreneurial networks framework by integrating it with the 7S model as a strategic networking base for Malaysian SMEs to utilize in enhancing competitive advantage and sustainability in the long term.

1. **Strategic Contributions:** Entrepreneurial Networking as Growth Strategy (Findings 1 and 7)

Networking, as a finding, emerged as a key strategy that is important for the growth of an SME, hence, supports the Strategy aspect of the McKinsey 7S Framework. The results of interview questions 1 and 7 suggest that SMEs participate in both formal and informal networking with the purpose to obtain business intelligence, increase their customer base, and gain valuable business relationships. These findings support the theoretical development of the 7S model to include entrepreneurial networking as a market-based strategy. Developing the Framework Further: Unlike the narrow approach of the 7S model, this research integrates networking as an external strategic element, which in turn increases not only the visibility of SMEs, but also their access to new markets and innovation opportunities.

2. **Structural Contributions:** Organized Networking for Sustainable Business Growth (Findings 2 and 8)

This research has even more new insights about structured networking as it pertains to the Component of the Structure. The evidence suggests that sustainable entrepreneurial networking organizations should be managed in a manner to provide adequate opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and trust building in the organizations. These findings highlight the importance of structured networking models which correspond to the Structural element of the 7S model. Developing the Framework Further: The 7S model has traditionally focused on the internal structure of the organization, but these findings suggest that SME stability and market integration is also fostered by formalized networking structures such as BNI, chambers of commerce, and industry alliances. This observation changes the scope of the model's structural emphasis to incorporate external networking structures that SMEs can utilize for sustained viability.

3. **Systematic Contributions:** Networking as a System (Finding 3)

Traditionally, the Systems element of the 7S model has to do with how the firm organizes the various workflows and procedures that make the running of the business seamless. This study, however, found that SMEs employing structured networking processes, such as the use of digital CRM systems, AI-powered networking tools, and formalized knowledge sharing, are more consistent and efficient in their networking results. The entrepreneurial attribute of leadership within networks is enhanced by this study along with the systems approach noting that in network management, a manager goes beyond the scope of management to building trust, credibility, and long-lasting relationships with the constituents.

4. The role of Leadership Style Contributions: Leadership in Networking Success (Finding 4)

The Style element of the 7S of McKinsey relates to management and the organizational culture of the institution. This study showed that entrepreneurs employing transformational and collaborative leadership are able to integrate the networks for business expansion much more effectively than others.

5. Staff and Skills Development Contributions: Human Capital: Staff and Skills Development for Networking Success (Findings 5 & 6)

There is a positive relationship between organizational networking success and employee engagement, skill development, and knowledge dissemination. Examples in meeting the framework objectives: a. Staff: Findings suggest that participating employees and students who are willing to network enhance the effectiveness of networking as they establish contacts, represent the organization during various networking functions, and promote the business; B. Skills: The study draws attention to transferable networking skills like communication, negotiation, and relationship-building as key assets that SMEs should develop within their human resources.

6. **Relevancy of Shared Values Contributions:** The Foundation of Sustainable Business Networking (Findings 7 & 8)

The Shared Values component of the 7S model is designed to focus on the organizational culture and values. The findings suggest that SMEs that cultivate networking relationships underpinned by trust, ethical business, and shared objectives tend to enjoy stronger and more sustainable business results. The researcher also highlighted the enrichment to the framework include: This study considers the role of shared values in business networking and argues that entrepreneurial networks are built on mutual trust, ethical principles, and collective achievement which makes them important for long term sustainability of SMEs.

This research develops the McKinsey 7S model further than the scope of internal analysis by adopting entrepreneurial networking as a strategy for SME development and sustainability. It strengthens networking as a central business strategy, calls for proactive networking strategies to boost SME resilience, and highlights the role of systematic approaches to maximize the efficacy of networking. It further extends the leadership element to capture building of relations, recognizes the contribution of employee motivation and training to networking, and underscores the importance of shared values in fostering sustainable business relations. The study refines the entrepreneurial networking framework for Malaysian SMEs by employing these concepts as an integrated, systematic, and empirical model aimed at increasing market competitiveness and ensuring sustainable business performance.

Theoretical Contributions Across McKinsey 7S, ANT, and MNT This research attains theoretical primary contribution by interrelating the organizational, social, and strategic viewpoints in the context of entrepreneurial networking. McKinsey 7S accounts for the

intra-strategic and operational control of SME networks, while ANT gives the concept of the diverse actor (human and non human) in the network structure and MNT places the network within the context of the competitive and market positioning strategy. Through the combination of these three perspectives, this study offers a comprehensive explanation on how Malaysian SMEs undergo entrepreneurial networking as not merely as a social engagement but as a sophisticated and systemic, technology-driven, market-oriented business strategy for sustainability and competitive growth.

5.4.2 Practical Contribution

The phenomenon of sustainable entrepreneurial networking is one that can greatly assist Malaysian SMEs and other business entrepreneurs wishing to achieve long-term success, and this study makes some useful contributions for them. These contributions stem directly from the research (1-8) and provide tangible measures SMEs can employ to use networking as a competitive advantage, improve business resilience, and achieve sustainable development.

1. Positioning Networking as a Core Business Strategy

A notable contribution of this research is that it consolidates SME networking into one business strategy for growth and sustainability (Finding 1). Comparatively smaller Malaysian SMEs are usually more resource poor, have little or no market access, and are more fiercely competed against in the context of certain industries, thus networking is critical for acquiring industry knowledge, strategic business partnerships, and business opportunities. Deployed stemmed networking methods can enhance market coverage, brand visibility, and business alliances with other industry stakeholders like suppliers, customers, investors, and government organisms. This is particularly useful for entrepreneurs who are trying to venture out of their immediate markets and try to embed themselves into regional and global supply chains.

2. Caring for the Achievement of a Residual Entrepreneurial Networking Design

This finding exposes the gap in the currently instituted collaboration networks in fostering useful business relationships that can be sustained over time (Finding 2). A large number of Malaysian SMEs operate within a formal or informal SME networking environment which tends to exist, at best, on a short-term and superficial basis rather than any longer-term and more strategic form of networking. In order to facilitate and perform greater formal networking activities, SMEs are able to incorporate informal business networking groups, industry associations, and cooperative alliances and even set their own industry associations. These networks create an environment for collective entrepreneurial or strategic networking where working relationships can happen for reasons other than selling or buying. These relationships are all forward looking and supply enough credence for attending to business networking which requires making an effort and the foremost precondition for interaction to take place. This form of networked support provision is particularly useful for business directed towards building a community of entrepreneurs, where difficulties can be eased, referrals can be made and business may develop.

3. Implementing Systematic Networking Processes for Consistency

Lack of systematic automation processes to establish the efficiency and effectiveness of networking activities was a major challenge to networking in SMEs (Finding 3). This study underscores the role of digital networking tools, CRM systems, and follow-up mechanisms in networking interactions in order to achieve optimal results. Business owners can employ technology-based solutions like AI matchmaking systems, LinkedIn groups, automated follow up systems, and other tools to engage with important stakeholders on a continuous basis. Incorporating systematic processes into the networking activities of SMEs eliminates uncertainty, facilitates progress tracking, and

allows the measurement of networking ROI, turning networking from an ephemeral event into a scalable and predictable growth strategy.

4. Enhanced Focus on Networking by Entrepreneurial Leaders

The effectiveness of leadership is important in business networking (Finding 4) in Malaysia. SMEs leaders are often overwhelmed with the day-to-day operations of the business while trying to manage external relationships, which diminishes the overall value of the network. The study validates the impact that transformational and relational forms of leadership have on building trust, collaboration, and stakeholder motivation. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to take an active leadership role in and out of the organization by attending networking functions, joining mentorship programs, and forming strategic business coalitions that cultivate opportunities. In order to develop leadership among owners of small and medium enterprises, training programs that emphasize networking, communication, and relational management should be incorporated into SME development programs.

5. Improving employee motivation and skills towards successful networking

This study has practical implications in highlighting the need for employee motivation and skills development as integral networking resources (Finding 5). Malaysian SMEs frequently look underutilizes the role employees can play in networking to create external relationships and new business opportunities. This study advocates for entrepreneurs having training programs to equip employees with networking skills, business communication, negotiation, and relationship management. When SMEs move to empower employees to actively participate in networking, businesses can expand their business influence and create multiple entry points within industry networks for growth. Furthermore, employee motivation can be improved by providing them

recognition for networking performance, as well as through performance mentoring programs that encourage proactive networking within the business.

6. Developing Transferable Skills Through Entrepreneurial Networking

This research examined networking as a skill acquisition strategy, particularly in relation to communication, problem-solving, and interdisciplinary integration (Finding 6). Numerous entrepreneurs are unable to pinpoint specific skills that would allow them to increase their business agility and adaptability. The investigation emphasizes the need for continual learning through networking where both entrepreneurs and their teams can learn from industry counterparts, share best practices, and respond to prevailing market demands. This contribution is very useful amongst Malaysian entrepreneurs who wish to make their businesses more scalable because it enables these entrepreneurs to use networking as a skill-development strategy which is vital in a dynamic business world.

7. Creating Value for Entrepreneurs Through Networking

This study shows that entrepreneurial networking has a strong impact on creating value, as it helps SMEs find new opportunities, obtain funds, and innovate (Finding 7). Many Malaysian SMEs face challenges regarding access to finances, market information, and business expansion prospects. These SMEs can get venture capital, government subsidies, and participate in foreign trade by being active members of well-structured networks. Entrepreneurs need to place themselves in rich networks like international trade associations, B2B matchmaking programs, and corporate mentoring to gain valuable business partners and investors.

8. The Application of the Sustainable Business Networking Model Towards Achieving Strategic Goals

Part of the findings of this study is the verification of the Sustainable Business Networking Model which rests on concepts of trust, ethical business practices, and value creation (Finding 8). Malaysian SMEs, for instance, tend to participate in superficial networking transactions that precludes the formation of deeper and sustainable business relationships. By adopting the shared values and ethical business collaboration with a long-term perspective, SMEs can develop networks that are capable of sustaining business continuity and economic growth. There is a need for integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, industry specific mentorships, and value-driven networking approaches to enhance business ecosystem resiliency.

9. The Application of “Shift” or “Change” in the McKinsey 7S Model

This study motivates practitioners to view entrepreneurial networking not as a sequential process but as an evolving tactic in need of constant adjustment to market conditions, new technologies, and changing consumer patterns. The addition of “shift” or “change” as the eighth element in the McKinsey 7S Framework captures what this research argues is a must for Malaysian SMEs: marketing networking is not just a change but requires a complete rethink for creativity and innovation. SME leaders have to shift to more proactive styles of leadership that increase flexibility, sharing of ideas, and integration between sectors. At the same time, employees need to acquire more general skills and adopt the habit of continuous learning in order to participate fully in the networking ecosystems.

Also, government and industry policymakers together need to change their perspective from fixed network initiatives towards fostering a more open, flexible, and technological approach to networking. Ultimately, this research offers first-of-its-kind strategies that

can be adapted through the McKinsey 7S analysis for Malaysian SMEs to incorporate "Shift" into their networking strategies, allowing them to pivot, innovate, and capture new business opportunities. With change as a strategic tool, SMEs can create robust business networks that can withstand challenges and promote growth and sustainability for an SME in a dynamic international market.

Practical Contributions For Malaysian SMEs and Entrepreneurs

The applied aspects of this research study present specific actions with which Malaysian SMEs and entrepreneurs can be assisted in developing more robust networking processes and achieve greater business sustainability. The method of structured networking as discussed in this paper will enable SMEs to:

1. Establish long term business partnership relationships as a result of industry networking.
2. Improved competitiveness through the use of digital networking and the application of strategic networking.
3. Improved leadership in networking situations through special coaching and mentoring activities.
4. Higher levels of employee participation in networking activities due to skills training and motivational activities.
5. Leverage on market intelligence and business opportunities through engagement in strategic networking initiatives in order to capitalize on business objectives.
6. By incorporating ethical and trust-based networking practices, enable sustainable growth through developing business relationships.
7. Embrace Change as adaptable business model.

These contributions give Malaysian SMEs a guide to transcend the ordinary, simplistic, and often transactional form of networking and instead adopt a more sophisticated, sustainable, and growth-driven form of networking. Entrepreneurs in the Malaysian SME context, who accept networking as a fundamental business strategy, are likely to be more agile to market changes, bolster inter-industry relations, and achieve business longevity and success.

5.5 Limitations of Study

The scope of existing literature on the entrepreneurial networking of Malaysian SMEs is very limited, hence, this study has adopted a qualitative and an exploratory approach. The study utilized semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect information from business owners and professionals, industry representatives, and experts, which permitted them to pursue an agile and responsive questioning style. Still, the findings were more oriented towards Malaysian SMEs and were not likely valid in other areas with differing geographical or economic contexts, particularly because of the limitations in time and the scope of the study. Although the research design produced voluminous qualitative data, its coverage is restricted to the sample chosen, pointing to the necessity of undertaking additional research within varying SME environments.

While analyzing McKinsey's 7S Framework in the context of entrepreneurial networking, some shortcomings became evident. The model's internal focus on organizational alignment undermines networking relationships that are crucial for the growth of SMEs. McKinsey's framework is less flexible and more abstract compared to Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Market-as-Network Theory (MNT), which concentrate on market relations, power relations, and the circulation of networks. In contrast, entrepreneurial networking tends to include decentralized and emergent relationships that the 7S does not consider. Moreover, power and social relations, which are central in an

entrepreneurial ecosystem, are bypassed within the model. ANT offers a sociological approach with an emphasis on an interaction between human and non-human actors, whereas MNT emphasizes power relations and competition among actors within market networks. Such approaches are especially important for SMEs facing the difficult barriers to entry, cooperation, and network dependence.

Also, McKinsey's 7S lacks customization possibilities which diminishes its usefulness in meeting the networking requirements of specialized fields such as technology startups, creative industries or export-oriented SMEs. Certain industries may be better served by more specialized frameworks, like Open Innovation Models (Chesborough, 2023) or Network Embeddedness Theory (Li et al., 2024). Regardless of these limitations, 7S has a role to play within the domain of networking by assisting the SMEs in having the right internal resources, leadership, and strategic configuration that can facilitate networking. It, however, doesn't work alone, it needs other tools to be effective.

Further study should use McKinsey's 7S with ANT and MNT in order to advance an entrepreneurial networking combination model. This model could blend McKinsey's emphasis on internal organizational preparedness with the interdependences that ANT's sociology pays attention to and the network oriented behaviors of the market that MNT focuses on. This would attend to the quintessentially dynamic nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems enabling SMEs to optimize their effectiveness in networking, competitiveness in the market, and resilience in business from the longer term.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

In congruence with the researcher's findings, a number of pertinent gaps have been established to facilitate the further refinement of entrepreneurial networking techniques in Malaysian SMEs.

To begin with, financially oriented policy research should examine how support from government policies can supplement the implementation of structured networking models. Subsequent research could evaluate the use of subsidized training and mentoring schemes as an incentive to encourage greater participation from SMEs in formalized business networks. Understanding how government-sponsored networking policies can aid in SME collaboration and growth will help design better assistance programs.

Also, there is a gap in the research examining the impact of digital transformation on entrepreneurial networking. Such studies ought to determine the effect AI-based networking tools, CRM software, and virtual business networks have on SME networking policies. The shift toward Industry 4.0 will require more research on how digital networking tools can improve market access, operational effectiveness, and strategic partnerships for SMEs.

The entrepreneurial networking domain also requires integration of leadership development perspectives on a wider scale. Future studies should look into the entrepreneurial and transformational leaderships with networking based growth strategies as training objectives. Researching the effects of leadership on network participation, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative business dealings over time would be helpful in developing competencies in the leadership of SMEs.

Finally, sustainability in entrepreneurial networking requires particular attention over time. Future studies need to assess the role of networking in the sustainability, innovation performance, and business survival of SMEs over time. Learning how social networks are developed and maintained with regards to business continuity, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility will enhance understanding of the systematic networking approach's benefits to SMEs.

To summary, future research should focus on investigating and analysing different networks, emphasizing high levels of diversity to bridge the gap between developing and establishing business relationship goals. Acting impartially and ethically is vital for creating an inclusive and successful society, aligning with aspects of Economic, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations. Building reciprocal relationships forms a significant element in business networking, where mutual trust and respect are earned and reciprocated, leading to higher efficiency, profitability, and sustainable growth for Malaysian SMEs. The present study has uncovered additional paths for future academic investigations:

- I. All other stakeholders in Malaysia should be included in the future research, especially policy makers from the public sectors. By having data from all stakeholders, generalization of the findings will be enhanced.
- II. A quantitative study with a large sample size is recommended for future research in order to improve the generalizability of the results. The quantitative data could be gathered through structured questions and testing by using correlation and regression analysis.
- III. A comparative analysis of case studies across different industries within the Malaysian SME sector, to analyze how the application of McKinsey's 7S Framework varies and impacts entrepreneurial networking differently.

- IV. A Longitudinal study to track the evolution of entrepreneurial networking strategies within Malaysian SMEs over time, considering changes in market dynamics, evolutionary adaptation in technological tools and regulatory frameworks.
- V. Potential research in the investigation of the roles of digitalization and technology adoption in enhancing entrepreneurial networking competencies among Malaysian SMEs within the context of McKinsey's 7S Framework.
- VI. Develop and validate performance metrics on how the entrepreneurial networking model affects SMEs in Malaysia; an examination of how the policy's interventions affect the entrepreneurship development in the context of effectiveness in networking.
- VII. Sector-specific studies may be interesting, since the focus in one particular industry can be "zoomed in" within the Malaysian SME context to investigate deeper business challenges and unlock any other potential.

In addressing these gaps, future attempts will be able to address the more precise entrepreneurial networking models which will have the potential to meet the systematic approach needs for Malaysian SMEs in the competitive changing business environment.

5.7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the findings, several key recommendations for future research and practical applications have emerged, aimed at enhancing the understanding of entrepreneurial networking and optimizing the strategic use of social networks for SMEs.

The study has explored various facets of entrepreneurial networking, emphasizing the significance of strategies, structures, and leadership in establishing sustainable networking platforms. The research recapitulated both theoretical and practical dimensions, highlighting strategies, structures, and leadership styles that contribute to the effectiveness of networking platforms. Key findings underscore the role of systematic approaches, staff motivation, transferable skills, and the value generated through business networking.

One big area of focus for future research should be the exploration of specific strategies that enhance value creation in social networks. For instance, the dynamic change as required has become another "S" component alongside with others 7S framework, that is "Shift", as equivalent to "Change" as discussed and stressed by many respondents. By investigating diverse networking approaches and their impact on different types of SMEs, deeper insights into effective networking practices can be gained. Additionally, research should concentrate on designing and testing various structural models for entrepreneurial networking platforms. As a result, comparative studies of different structures in varied cultural and economic contexts could help identify the most effective configurations for sustainability in business.

With deeper scanning of the results, this research sought to provide answers and offer suggestions to improve the networking of entrepreneurs for Malaysian SMEs. The research reconfirms the importance of strategic networking, leadership, structured systems, and shared culture as the pillars of a sustainable business ecosystem. In contrast, however, the study goes a step further to modify the traditional McKinsey 7S Framework by adding "Shift" or "Change" as a component, knowing that the ability to adapt is far more than an outcome of effective networking. Change is a constant and ongoing phenomenon of modern civilization that shapes entrepreneurial decision-making, leadership, and networking paradigm shifts. This research demonstrates that

SMEs need to embrace and incorporate a “Shift” strategy into their strategic networking framework if they wish to remain agile and adaptive to industry disruptions, technological change, and dynamic market conditions. In an era where uncertainty and volatility characterizes the business environment, orchestrating and undergoing transformation is bound to foster successful and sustainable business growth. Networking, once regarded as a secondary activity of the business, is now a primary function as it seeks to generate collaboration, confidence, and mutual development.

How an SME is able to pivot, connect, and evolve will determine if it thrives or remains stagnant. As history and entrepreneurial success stories such as BNI’s Givers Gain illustrate, developing adaptive networks goes beyond personal business goals but is a matter of contributing to an entrepreneurial ecosystem where success is shared, opportunities are unlocked, and there is resilience. The forward-looking is adaptable and is always looking to improve their network, understanding change is not a challenge but an opportunity while knowing adaptability is the gap between today’s efforts and tomorrow’s success. It is time to embrace “Shift” in building business networks that enhance sustainability and lead Malaysian SMEs towards greater innovation, connection, and prosperity.

Further studies should also examine the implementation of systematic networking models, such as the McKinsey 7S Framework, in real-world scenarios. Longitudinal research could provide insights into the long-term benefits and challenges associated with adopting a network model. Investigating the impact of various leadership styles on networking effectiveness is equally crucial, with a particular focus on how transformational, transactional, and other leadership styles influence network dynamics and entrepreneurial outcomes which is worth to explore more in this extent.

Understanding the factors that motivate staff within networking platforms is fundamental. Thus, further research should investigate the role of incentives (staff remuneration or government policies), recognition, and professional development in enhancing staff engagement and productivity in networking activities. Additionally, exploring the specific skills that entrepreneurs acquire through networking could provide valuable insights, with studies focusing on identifying key transferable skills and how they can contribute to business success as a whole.

Future research should also examine the mechanisms through in which business networking creates value for entrepreneurship in one particular's field. Examining the economic, social, and strategic benefits of networking can help quantify its impact and provide better guidance in implementing policy and improve its practicability. Nevertheless, investigating the characteristics of sustainable networking models is vital, with the aim of developing a sustainable model that can be adapted across different industries and regions to ensure the long-term viability of networking platforms.

The study has made significant theoretical contributions by integrating multiple theories and models to enhance the understanding of entrepreneurial networking at ease. Future research should build on these theoretical foundations to explore new dimensions and interactions within entrepreneurial networks with its key success factors. Practical contributions include the development of actionable strategies and models for Malaysian SMEs to improve their networking practices, with future research aiming to refine these strategies and assess their effectiveness in various contexts at large.

Addressing the limitations of the study, such as sample size, geographical focus, and methodological constraints in near future research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial networking. Expanding the scope and employing

diverse research methods will also help overcome these limitations. But not limited to its current constraints.

Winston Churchill said it best about entrepreneurship: "Some see private enterprise as a predatory target to be shot, others as a cow to be milked, but few are those who see it as a sturdy horse pulling the wagon. Only a handful see it for what it really is – the strong horse that pulls the whole cart."⁵ Entrepreneurs Walk through a hailstorm of problems and face business challenges, family heartbreaks, demands and emotional moments from everyday life. No Entrepreneur can "fight" in the battlefield with a shield that can last forever. Thus, change must occur at the right time, in the right place, and with the right strategy.

When entrepreneurs go through a hell of experiments, they keep going. For most of them, success is not final, failure is not a shame, just like a Chinese old saying: "You rise from where you have fallen." Imagine a nation with an empowered entrepreneurial spirit; a strong force will stay with the nation. The path to the journey of success is always full of twists and challenges. Eliminating barrier removal is a constant process, yet the results can be very fruitful once all problems are resolved and aligned with the company's strategies and objectives.

The creation of BNI, founded by Ivan Misner, is a success story behind the Givers Gain's philosophy. To date, BNI members transacted over millions of referrals resulting in more than \$20.3 billion (USD) in business,⁶ which is reliant on trust and quality relationships

⁵ Online Information: <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/10300/>, accessed on 3rd March 2024.

⁶ Browse: [https://www.bni.com/why-join/my-bni-story#:~:text=BNI%20Members%20rely%20on%20a,billion%20\(USD\)%20in%20business](https://www.bni.com/why-join/my-bni-story#:~:text=BNI%20Members%20rely%20on%20a,billion%20(USD)%20in%20business). Accessed on 26.3.2024.

in a business network. Behind the scenes, member entrepreneurs are busy networking at their local chapter to find their ideal referrals through BNI's seven core values and to farm business together with their network members. Through networking, entrepreneurs develop their collective ability to navigate complexity and create meaningful values in today's dynamic changing business environment. Most people would agree that we must work together to address our greatest challenges, in addition to finding solutions for our companies or ourselves. But how can we make a difference by standing out and creating value in networking and turning this into reality, rather than just an aspiration? Those who can benefit from networking are better off than those who cannot. We need to take one more step to make this happen.

The path of an entrepreneur involves a never-ending cycle of learning new things, adjusting where necessary, and engaging in meaningful interactions. This research has emphasized the importance of strategic entrepreneurial networking among Malaysian SMEs with regard to their resilience and sustainability. It has also shown how the combination of theoretical knowledge and practical experience can help businesses deal with dynamic and sophisticated markets using well-defined networking plans. Malaysian SMEs are systematically assisted with a McKinsey 7S Framework that is further enhanced with the networking elements in strengthening their internal systems for the development of valuable external contacts.

In this time of constant variability and unpredictability, the achievement of entrepreneur does not rely solely on personal skills but more on purposeful relationships constructed with other people. Networking has transformed from a peripheral business activity to a primary business activity that creates opportunities for business growth, innovation, and competitive edge among SMEs. The capability to shift, cooperate, and willingness to adapt will separate the successful firms from those that are unsustainable.

As the study points out, successful entrepreneurs will flourish in the future because of a network that is dynamic, trust-based, and value-aligned. The purpose of entrepreneurship goes beyond personal profit; it seeks to achieve social welfare, where individuals are able to assist one another while improving themselves. History, from the wise Churchill to the Givers Gain of BNI, reminds us that entrepreneurship is more than actions; it is metamorphic connections. Networking enables a unique form of synergy in which the achievement of a single entrepreneur leads to the advancement of an entire ecosystem, illustrating the beauty of networking.

Ultimately, the path forward will require a new way of thinking: one that sees change as a possible opportunity rather than a disruption. Entrepreneurs have to constantly update their plans, get new information, and build new contacts if they are to remain relevant. The pillars of sustainable business success are good relations, value creation, and the willingness to take risks. In the face of a rapidly changing business environment, those who are able to appreciate and leverage the potency of entrepreneurial networking will not only survive, but prosper, as we begin to establish a more integrated global economy. Now is the moment for the next evolution, to motivate action not merely to engage with networks, but build networks which support businesses floundering in streams of isolation, emerging tougher and more adaptable than ever before.

REFERENCES

Abdurakhmonov, M., Ridge, J.W., Hill, A.D. and February (2021), *Unpacking firm external dependence: how government contract dependence affects firm investments and market performance*, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 64 No. 1, pp. 327-350.

Abram, D. Anders, (2018), *Networked learning with professional boosts student's self-efficacy for social networking and professional development*, *Computers & Education* 127, 13-29.=

Abrar-Ul-Haq, M., Razani, M., Jali, M., Md, G. and Islam, N. (2015), *Factors affecting small and medium enterprises (SMES) development in Pakistan*, *Environmental Sciences*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 546-552, doi: 10.5829/idosi.ajeaes.2015.15.4.12572.

Abdullah, M. A., Shamsuddin, A., Wahab, S. A., & Hamid, M. S. R. (2009), *Preliminary findings: The development of entrepreneurial orientation in Malaysia SMEs*, *International Journal of Business and Management*, 4(9), 123-132.

Abdullah, M. A., Hamid, A. B. A., & Hashim, N. A. (2021), *Malay Entrepreneurs' Narrative of a Social Network through the Perspective of Social Network Theory*, *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, 57, 60-72. <https://hkjoss.com/index.php/journal/article/view/762>

Achrol, Ravi S. (1997), *Changes in the theory of interorganisational relations in marketing: Towards a network paradigm*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25 (1), 56-7

Achrol, Ravi S. and Philip Kotler (1999), *Marketing in the Network Economy*, *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (special issue), 146-63.

Acosta, P. S., Colomo-Palacios, R., & Loukis, E. N. (2011), *A Review of the RBV of the Approaches (2nd ed.)*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Acs, ZJ & Audretsch, DB, (2003), *Handbook of Entrepreneurship Research*, Springer Science+ Business Media Inc, New York.

Acs, Z. J., Audretsch, D. B., & Lehmann, E. E. (2013), *The knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship*. *Small Business Economics*, 41(4), 757-774.

Acs, Z., Stam, E., Audretsch, D. and O'Connor, A. (2017), *The lineages of the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach*, *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 49, pp. 1-15, doi: 10.1007/s11187-017- 9864-8.

Aguilar Talamante, P., & Heredia Bustamante, J. A. (2020), *Entrepreneurship against the pandemic caused by the COVID- 19: Entrepreneurship against the pandemic caused by the COVID-19*, *Revista de Investigación Académica Sin Frontera*, 1-18. <https://revistainvestigacionacademicasinfrontera.unison.mx/index.php/RDIASF/article/view/340>.

Agupusi, P. (2007), *Small business development and poverty alleviation in Alexandra, South Africa*. In second meeting of the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality (ECINEQ Society), Berlin.

Ahmad, S.Z. (2013), *The need for inclusion of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia lower and higher learning institutions*, *Education þ Training*, Vol. 55 No. 2, pp. 191-203, doi: 10.1108/00400911311304823

Ahmad, S.Z. and Buchanan, R.F. (2015), *Entrepreneurship education in Malaysian universities*, *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 349-366, doi: 10.1080/13583883.2015.1106577

Ahmad, N. H., Abdul Rani, N. S., & Kassim, S. K. (2010), *Business challenges and strategies for development of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia*, *International Journal of Business Competition and Growth*, 1(2), 177-197.

Aiken, M. and J. Hage (1968), *Organisational interdependence, intraorganizational structure*, *American Sociological Review*, 33, 912-30.

Akrich, M., Callon, M., & Latour, B. (2021), *The key to success in innovation part I: The art of interessement*, *Research Policy*, 50(5), 104265.

Alba, R. D. (1982), *Taking stock of network analysis*, *Research in the Sociology of Organisations*, 1, 39-74.

Aldrich, H. E. (1979), *Organizations and Environments*, Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Aldrich H. E. and Auster E (1986), *Even dwarfs started small: Liabilities of age and size and their strategic implications*, *Research in Organizational Behavior* 8: 165–198.

Aldrich, H. E. and Baker, T. (2001), *Learning and legitimacy: Entrepreneurial responses to constraints on the emergence of new populations and organizations*. In C. B. Schoonhoven and E. Romanelli (Eds.), *The Entrepreneurship Dynamics: Origins of Entrepreneurship and the Evolution of Industries*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 262–285.

Aldrich, H.E. and Catherine Zimmer (1986), *Entrepreneurship Through Social Networks*. In Smilor, R. and Sexton, D. (eds.), *The Art of Science of Entrepreneurship*. New York, Ballinger.

Aldrich, H. E. and Fiol, C. M. (1994), *Fools rush in? The institutional context of industry creation*, *Academy of Management Review*, 19, (4), 645–670.

Alex Ching, S.C. (2012), *Breaking into the International Jewelry Market: Legitimacy Strategies and Entrepreneurship of Hong Kong Small Businesses*, City University of Hong Kong, *International Journal of China Marketing* vol. 2(2).

Ali, K. K., Ali, M. N. M., Panatik, S. A., & Rahman, A. R. A. (2018), *Framework and Development of Malaysian Business Ethics Module*. In SHS Web of Conferences (Vol. 56, p. 4004). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20185604004>

Ali Shah, A., Mehmood, T., Aamir Hashmi, M., Maqsood Shah, S. and Muhammad Shaikh, F. (2011), *Performance of SMEs in export growth and its impact on economy of Pakistan*, *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 6 No. 7, pp. 287-297, doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v6n7p287

Ali, M. H., Hilman, H., & Gorondutse, A. H. (2018), *The effect of entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and total quality management on the performance of SMEs*, *Management Science Letters*, 8(6), 507-518.

Amonini, C., McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Soutar, G.N. and Sweeney, J.C. (2010), *How professional service firms compete in the market: an exploratory study*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 26 Nos 1/2, pp. 28-55.

Anam, C. & Churiyah, M., (2023), *7S-McKinsey Based Organizational Performance Model on MSMEs*, *Jurnal Manajemen dan Kewirausahaan (JMK)*, JMK 8 (2) 2023, 112-120, Retrieved from: <http://ejournal.uniska-kediri.ac.id/index.php/ManajemenKewirausahaan>

Anderson, Alexandra Heather (2018), *International Entrepreneurial Capabilities: The Role of Networks in the Small Multinational Enterprise*, DBA Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University.

Anderson, James C. and Håken Håkansson (1994), *Dyadic Business relationships within a Business Network Context*, *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (4), 15.

Anderson, A. R., Park, J., & Jack, S. (2007), *Entrepreneurial social capital: Conceptualizing social capital in new high-tech firms*, *International Small Business Journal*, 25(3), 245–272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242607076526>

Andrésen, E., Lundberg, H. and Roxenhall, T. (2012), *Designing for commitment in regional strategic networks*, *Management Research Review*, Vol. 35 No. 6, pp. 531-552.

Araujo, Luis (2004), *Markets, Market Making and Marketing*, in Proceedings of the 20th Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference. Copenhagen, Denmark.

Araujo, Luis and Geoff Easton (1996), *Networks in Sociometric Systems*, in *Networks in Marketing*, Dawn Iacobucci, ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ardichvili, A., Cardozo, R.N. & Ray, S. (2003), *A theory of entrepreneurial opportunity identification and development*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(1), 105-123. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(01\)00068-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(01)00068-4)

Anwar ul Haq, M., Usman, M., Hussain, N. and Anjum, Z.-Z. (2014), *Entrepreneurial activity in China and Pakistan: a GEM data evidence*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 179-193, doi: 10.1108/JEEE-03-2014-0006.

Ardichvili, A., Cardozo, R., & Ray, S. (2003), *A theory of entrepreneurial opportunity identification and development*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(1), 105-123.

Artto, K., Ahola, T., Kyrö, R., & Peltokorpi, A. (2017), *Managing business networks for value creation in facilities and their external environments: A study on co-location*. *Facilities*, 35(1-2), 99-115.

Asia Foundation (2023), *Understanding the Challenges of Malaysian Women Entrepreneurs*, Retrieved from asiafoundation.org

Asia School of Business. (2023), *Degree Programs and Curriculum*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_School_of_Business

Athapathtu, H. K. S. H. (2016), *An overview of strategic management: an analysis of the concepts and the importance of strategic management*, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 6(2), 124-127.

Audretsch, D., Mason, C., Miles, M.P. and O'Connor, A. (2018), *The dynamics of entrepreneurial ecosystems*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 30 Nos 3-4, pp. 471-474, doi: 10.1080/08985626.2018.1436035.

Awang, Z., Hussain, M., & Noor, M. M. (2022), *Cultural norms and entrepreneurial networking in Malaysia*, *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 45(3), 256–269.

Awang Mohd Mahzan, Alfitri, Ahmad A.R., Careemdeen, J.D. & Ahmad, J. (2022), *Socio-Ecological Support and Physical Facilities Satisfaction: How They Link to Social Participation and Well-Being among Urban Residents in Malaysia*, MDPI.

Axelsson, Bjorn and Geoff Easton (1992), *Industrial Networks, A New View of Reality*, London: Routledge

Ayala, J. C., & Manzano, G. (2014), *The resilience of the entrepreneur. Influence on the success of the business. A longitudinal analysis*, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 42, 126–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2014.02.004>

Babbie, E. (1998), *Survey Research Method (2nd ed.)*, Belmont: Wadsworth.

Babnik, N. (2015), *The Role of Business Networking in Success of B2B Companies in the Slovenian Market*, Master Thesis: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics.

Bagozzi, Richard P. (1975), *Marketing as an Exchange*, *Journal of Marketing*, 39 (4), 32-39.

Baishya, B. (2015), *Mc Kinsey 7s Framework in Corporate Planning and Policy*, *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Science Society and Culture(IJRSSC)*, 11(1), 165–168.

Baker, Wayne. (1984), *The social structure of the national securities market*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 89, 775-811.

Baker, Wayne (1992), *The Network Organisation in Theory and Practice*, Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press

Baker, T.L. (1994), *Doing Social research (2nd Edition)*, New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., pp.182.

Bass, B. M. (1985), *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*, Free Press.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994), *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*, Sage Publications.

Basit A., Hassan Z. and Sethu S. (2024), *Entrepreneurial Success: Key Challenges Faced by Malaysian Women Entrepreneurs in 21st Century*, International Journal of Business and Management 15 (9):122-122.

Ball, L. (2005), *Networking is the buzzword for referrals*, Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration News 225(2): 36.

Baraldi, E., Lind, J., & Lutz, J. (2021), *Networked Business Ecosystems and Relationship Dynamics: Insights from Industrial Marketing*, Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 36(3), 475-493.

Baraldi, E., Lind, J., & Lutz, J. (2022). *Networked Business Ecosystems and Relationship Dynamics: Insights from Industrial Marketing*. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37(4), 540-558.

Barbasi, A.-L. (2003), *How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What it Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life*, Plume, London.

Barney, J. (1991), *Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage*. Journal of Management, 17(1), 99–120.

Barney, J. B. (1986a), *Organizational Culture: Can It Be a Source of Sustained Competitive Advantage?* Academy of Management Review, 11(3), 656–665.

Barney, J. B. (1986b), *Strategic Factor Markets: Expectations, Luck, and Business Strategy*, Management Science, 32(10), 1231–1241. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.10.1231>

Barney, J. B. (2014), *How marketing scholars might help address issues in resource-based theory*, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 42(1), 24–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-013-0351-8>

Barney, J. B., & Clark, D. N. (2007), *Resource-Based Theory: Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage*, (Vol. 24). OXFORD. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1362/026725708X382046>

Barney, J. B., & Hesterly, W. S. (2015), *Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage (Fifth, Global Edition)*, Pearson.

- Barney, J. (2021), *Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage: Concepts and Cases*. Pearson Education.
- Baron, RA. (2002), *OB and Entrepreneurship: The Reciprocal Benefits of Closer Conceptual Links*, *Research In Organizational Behavior*, 24: 225-269.
- Baron, R. A., & Markman, G. D. (2003), *Beyond social capital: The role of entrepreneurs' social competence in their financial success*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(1), 41–60. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(00\)00069-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(00)00069-0)
- Barth, F. (ed.) (1972), *The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway*, Universitetsforlaget.
- Baum JA, Li SX and Usher JM (2000), *Making the next move: How experiential and vicarious learning shape the locations of chains' acquisitions*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 45(4): 766–801.
- Becker, G. S. (1964), *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*, University of Chicago Press.
- Belitski, M. and Heron, K. (2017), *Expanding entrepreneurship education ecosystems*, *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 163-177, doi: 10.1108/JMD-06-2016-0121.
- Berg, B. L. (1989), *Qualitative Research Methods*, Boston: Pearson Education.
- Bernard, H. R. (2000). *Social Research Method: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Besser, T.L. and Miller, N. (2011), *The structural, social, and strategic factors associated with successful business networks*, *Entrepreneurship&Regional Development*, Vol. 23 Nos 3/4, pp. 113-133.
- Best, M. (1990), *The New Competition*, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Birley, Susan (1985), *The Role of Networks in the Entrepreneurial Process*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 1, 107-17
- Boddy, C. R. (2022), *Sample Size for Qualitative Research: Is 15 Enough?* *Journal of Business Research*, 142, 12-19.
- Borgatti, S. P., & Halgin, D. S. (2011), *On network theory*, *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1168–1181. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0641>

- Bolton W.K. and Thompson J.L. (2000), *Entrepreneurs: Talent, Temperament, Technique*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Distinction*, London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991), *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. C. (1977), *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London: Sage.
- Boyce, G. (2001), *Co-operative structures in global business: communication, transferring knowledge and learning across the corporate frontier*, New York: Routledge.
- Brass, D. J., Galaskiewicz, J., Greve, H.R. & Tsai, W. (2004), *Taking stock of networks and organizations: a multilevel perspective*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(6), 795-817.
- Breslin, D., & Jones, S. (2023), *Entrepreneurial learning and business networking: The role of communication skills in new venture success*, *Journal of Business Research*, 157, 104367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.104367>
- Bridgewater, S. & Egan, C. (2002), *International marketing relationships: Profitable marketing relationships series*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bryman, A. (2021), *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press.
Crew
- Brynjolfsson, E., & McAfee, A. (2014), *The second machine age: Work, progress, and prosperity in a time of brilliant technologies*, W. W. Norton & Company.
- Broad, Roy M. (2008), *Networked-in; developing a model of network marketing performance*, in 24th Annual IMP Conference. Uppsala, Sweden.
- Broad, Roy M. (2009), *Survey on the Benefits of Networking for Business in the West Midlands*, Birmingham: Advantage West Midlands.
- Broad, Roy M. (2012), *Networking Performance: A study of the benefits of business networking in the West Midlands*, Phd Thesis, University of Wolverhampton.

Broad, M. (2012), *Perceptions of Networks and Actor Relations: A Longitudinal Perspective on Business Networking*, Oxford University Press.

Brockhaus, R. H. (1975), *I-E Locus of Control Scores as Predictors of Entrepreneurial Intentions*, Proceedings. New Orleans: Academy of Management.

Brockhaus, R. H. (1980a), *Psychological and Environmental Factors which Distinguish the Successful from the Unsuccessful Entrepreneur*, A longitudinal Study, Academy of Management Proceedings.

Brockhaus, R. H. (1980b), *Risk Taking Propensity of Entrepreneurs*, Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 23, No. 3. Pp 509-520.

Brouthers K, Nakos G and Dimitratos P (2015), *SME entrepreneurial orientation, international performance, and the moderating role of strategic alliances*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 39(5): 1161–1187.

Brouthers LE and Nakos G (2005), *The role of systematic international market selection on small firms' export performance*, Journal of Small Business Management 43(4): 363–381.

Brown, R., & Rocha, A. (2020), *Entrepreneurial uncertainty during the Covid-19 crisis: Mapping the temporal dynamics of entrepreneurial finance*, Journal of Business Venturing Insights, 14(April), e00174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2020.e00174>

Bruneel, J., Ratinho, T., Clarysse, B. and Groen, A. (2012), *The evolution of Business incubators: comparing demand and supply of business incubation services across different incubator generations*, Technovation, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 110-121.

Bruyat, C., & Julien, P. A. (2001), *Defining the field of research in entrepreneurship*. Journal of business venturing, 16(2), 165-180.

Bruton, G.D., Ahlstrom, D. and Li, H.L. (2010), *Institutional theory and entrepreneurship: where are we now and where do we need to move in the future?*, Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 421-440.

Buchanan, M. (2002), *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking*, Science of Networks, Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, MA.

Burg, Bob (1999), *Endless Referrals: Network Your Everyday Contacts into Sales* (2nd ed.). Jupiter Fl: McGraw Hill.

Burt, R. (1992), *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Burt, R. S. (1980), *Co-optive corporate actor networks: a reconsideration of interlocking directories involving American manufacturing*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, p.557-82.

Burt, R. S. (1997), *The contingent value of social capital*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(2), 339-365.

Burt, R. S. (2000), *The network structure of social capital*, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 22, 345-423.

Burt, R. S. (2005), *Brokerage and closure: An introduction to social capital*, Oxford University Press.

Burton, M.D., Dahl, M.S. and Sorenson, O. (2016), *Do startups create good jobs?*, ILR Review, available at: <https://inequality.hks.harvard.edu/files/inequality/files/sorenson16.pdf>.

Burt, R. S. (2021), *Network Advantage: How to Unlock Value from Your Connections*, Oxford University Press.

Cai, L., Liu, Q., Deng, S., Alon, I., (2012), *A general review of entrepreneurship research (1998 to 2010): Theoretical implications, management applications and future research directions*, *African Journal of Business Management* Vol. 6(2), pp.474-492, 18 January, 2012.

Callon, M. (1991), *Techno-economic networks and irreversibility*, *The Sociological Review*, 38(1), 132-161.

Callon, M. (2021), *Market Devices and Networked Markets: An Actor-Network Perspective*, Cambridge University Press.

Cardon, M. S., Zietsma, C., Saporito, P., Matherne, B. P., & Davis, C. (2011), *A tale of passion: New insights into entrepreneurship from a parenthood metaphor*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(1), 13-27.

Carolis DMD, Saporito P (2006), *Social capital, cognition, and entrepreneurial opportunities: A theoretical framework.*, *Entrep. Theory Pract.*, 30(1): 41-56.

Carolis MD, Litzky BE, Eddleston KA (2009), *Why networks enhance the progress of new venture creation: the influence of social capital and cognition*, *Entrepren.: Theory and Practice*. 33(2): 527-545.

Cardon, M.S., Stevens, C.E. & Potter, D.R. (2011), *Misfortunes or mistakes? Cultural sensemaking of entrepreneurial failure*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26, 79-92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2009.06.004>

Carson, David, Stan Cromie, Pauric McGowan, and Jimmy Hill (1995), *Marketing and Entrepreneurship in SME's (1st ed.)*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Casson, M. (2003), *The Entrepreneur an Economic Theory*, 2nd edn. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Casson, Mark (1991), *The Entrepreneur. An Economic Theory*, Hampshire, England, Gregg Revivals.

Castro, J.M., Castro, A.M., Gavilanez, D.P. and Macias, M.D.C.G.(2022), *Post Pandemic Entrepreneurship Surge: Impact on Economic Growth*, *Centro Sur* Vol.6, No.4-October-December.

Cavico, F.J. and Mujtaba, B.G. (2021), *Common Law Torts in Business and How to Avoid Them: A Handbook for Managers*, ILEAD Academy, FL.

CCS & Co. (2023, July 13), *Budget 2023: Redefinition of 'Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise ("MSME")'*, Retrieved from <https://ccs-co.com/post/budget-2023-redefinition-msme/>. Accessed on 10th November 2024.

Cervelló-Royo, R., Moya-Clemente, I., Perelló-Marín, M. R., & Ribes-Giner, G. (2020), *Sustainable development, economic and financial factors, that influence the opportunity-driven entrepreneurship. An fsQCA approach*, *Journal of Business Research*, 115(October), 393-402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.10.031>.

Chang, T. H., Chen, Y. L., & Lee, H. Y. (2023), *The impact of entrepreneurial communication on networking performance and innovation strategies*, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 35(2), 147-165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2023.2166789>

Chell, Elizabeth (2000), *Networking, Entrepreneurship and Microbusiness Behaviour,, entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 12 (3), 195-216.

Chell, E. (2001), *Entrepreneurship: Globalisation, innovation and development*, Cornwall: TJ International.

Chen, L., & Li, H. (2023), *The role of digital networking in entrepreneurial success: A cross-industry analysis*, *Journal of Business Research*, 159, 104873. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.104873>

Cheng, T. (2019), *The study of relationship for personality traits, perception risk, motivation, business strategies environment factors and business performance to entrepreneurs*, *International Journal of Organisation Innovation*, 12(2), 360-371.

Cheng, W., Kadir, K. A., & Bohari, A. M. (2014), *The Strategic Planning of SMEs in Malaysia: a view of external environmental scanning*, *International Journal of Business and Society*, 15(3), 437-446.

Chesbrough, H., (2023), *Twenty Years of Open Innovation*, MIT Sloan Management Review, December, accessed from: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/twenty-years-of-open-innovation/>.

Chetty S, Karami M and Martín OM (2018), *Opportunity discovery and creation as a duality: Evidence from small firms' foreign market entries*, *Journal of International Marketing* 26: 70–93.

Chiara Cantù, (2015), *A service incubator business model: external networking orientation*, *IMP Journal*, Vol. 9 Issue: 3, pp.267-285,

Chin, O., & Lim, C. (2012), *University-industry collaboration and SME networking: Knowledge transfer and business growth in Malaysia*, Retrieved from Rauli CBS, Open Journal.

Chin, W. & Lim, T. (2022), *The Role of Digital Networking in SME Growth in Malaysia: An Empirical Study*, *Journal of Business & Digital Economy*, 45(2), 98-112.

Chong, Wei Ying, (2012), *Critical success factors for small and medium enterprises: Perceptions of entrepreneurs in urban Malaysia*, *Journal of Business and Policy Research* 7: 204–15.

Chua, Kim Aik, (2017), *Doctor of Philosophy Thesis in Managing Food Security and Sustainable Intensification: A Case Study of Seed Industry in Malaysia*, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia.

Cohen, M. A., Parker, S. K., & Wang, Y. (2022), *Team-based entrepreneurship: Exploring how teamwork fosters business performance in SMEs*, *Small Business Economics*, 60(1), 89-110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00690-9>

Coleman, J. S. (1988), *Social capital in the creation of human capital*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

Coleman, Daniel (1996), *Emotional Intelligence (1st ed.)*, London: Bloomsbury.

Collinson, Elaine and Eleanor Shaw (2001), "Entrepreneurial Marketing - A Historic Perspective on Development and Practice," *Management Decision*, 39 (9), 761-66.

Collinson, E. and Shaw, E. (2001), *Entrepreneurial marketing – a historical perspective*, *Management Decision*, Vol. 39 No. 9, pp. 761-6.

Connected Commerce Council. (2020), *How digital tools power small businesses amid COVID-19*, Retrieved December, 2023, from Connected Commerce Council: <https://digitallyempowered.connectedcouncil.org>

Cook, Karen S. and Richard M. Emerson (1984), *Exchange networks and the analysis of complex organisations*, *Research in the Sociology of Organisations* (3), 1-30.

Cook, Karen S. and Richard M. Emerson (1987), *Social Exchange Theory*, London: Sage Publications.

Copp, C.B. and Ivy, R.L. (2001), *Networking trends of small tourism business in post-socialist Slovakia*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 345-353.

Corden, A., & Sainsbury, R. (2005), *Verbatim quotations: Whose views count?* *Qualitative Researcher*, (pp. 4-6).

Corner, P. D., Singh, S., & Pavlovich, K. (2017), *Entrepreneurial resilience and venture failure*, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 35(6), 687–708. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242616685604>

Corrall, S. (2000), *Strategic Management of Information Services: A Planning Handbook*, Aslib/IMI, London.

Corrall, S. (2008), *Information literacy strategy development in higher education: an exploratory study*, International Journal of Information Management, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 26-37, available at: <http://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJINFOMGT.2007.07.002>

Coviello NE and Munro HJ (1995), *Growing the entrepreneurial firm: Networking for international market development*, European Journal of Marketing 29(7): 49-61.

Coviello, N. E. (2006), *The network dynamics of international new ventures*, Journal of International Business Studies, 37(5), 713-731. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400219>

Coviello NE, McDougall PP and Oviatt BM (2011), *The emergence, advance and future of international entrepreneurship research: An introduction to the special forum*, Journal of Business Venturing 26(6): 625-631.

Covin JG and Lumpkin GT (2011), *Entrepreneurial orientation theory and research: Reflections on a needed construct*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 35(5): 855-872.

Covin JG and Miller D (2014) *International entrepreneurial orientation: Conceptual considerations, research themes, measurement issues, and future research directions*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 38(1): 11-44.

Covin JG and Slevin DP (1989) *Strategic management of small firms in hostile and benign environments*, Strategic Management Journal 10(1): 75-87.

Covin JG and Wales WJ (2018), *Crafting high-impact entrepreneurial orientation research: Some suggested guidelines*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 43(1): 3-18.

Cox, A.M., Pinfield, S., and Rutter, S., (2018), *Extending McKinsey's 7S model to understand strategic alignment in academic libraries*, Library Management.

Creswell, J. W. (1994), *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Creswell, J.W.(2005), *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018), *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.), SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2021), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, SAGE Publications.
- Curran, J., Jarvis, R., Blackburn, R.A. and Black, S. (1991), *Networks and small firms: constructs, methodological strategies and some findings*, International Small Business Journal, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 13-25.
- Dachler, H. P., & Wilpert, B. (1978), *Conceptual dimensions and boundaries of participation in organizations: A critical evaluation*, Administrative Science Quarterly, 23.
- Daft, R. L. (2012), *Management (10th ed.)*, Mason, Ohio: South-Western, Cengage Learning.
- Darlington, Y., & Scott, D. (2002), *Qualitative Research in Practice: Stories from the Field*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Davari, A. and Farokhmanesh, T. (2017), *Impact of entrepreneurship policies on opportunity to startup*, Management Science Letters, Vol. 7 No. 9, pp. 431-438.
- Davidsson, P., & Honig, B. (2003), *The role of social and human capital among nascent entrepreneurs*, Journal of Business Venturing, 18(3), 301–331. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(02\)00097-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(02)00097-6)
- Dawson, D., Fountain, J., & Cohen, D. A. (2011), *Seasonality and the Lifestyle " Conundrum ": An Analysis of Lifestyle Entrepreneurship in Wine Tourism Regions Seasonality and the Lifestyle " Conundrum ": An Analysis of Lifestyle Entrepreneurship in Wine Tourism Regions*, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 37-41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2011.597580>
- De Carlo, J.F. and Lyons, P.R. (1979), *A Comparison of Selected Personal Characteristics of Minority Female Entrepreneures*, Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 17, No. 4, October.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), *The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior*, Psychological Inquiry, 11(4), 227–268.

- De Clercq D, Sapienza HJ and Crijns H (2005), *The internationalization of small and medium-sized firms*, *Small Business Economics* 24(4): 409–419.
- De Clercq, D. and Voronov, M. (2009), *Toward a Practice Perspective of Entrepreneurship Entrepreneurial Legitimacy as Habitus*, *International Small Business Journal*, 27, (4), 395–419.
- Dedekam, Anders (1977), *Poor Regions in Rich Societies. Toward a theory of Community Development in Backward and Remote Areas in Advanced Countries*, Skrifter nr. 44, Økonomisk Fagseksjon, Møre og Romsdal Distriktshøgskole.
- De Klerk, S. (2006), *Networking practices amongst Gauteng businesses: An analysis and proposed framework*, Unpublished PhD thesis. Potchefstroom: NWU
- Delmar, F., & Shane, S. (2003), *Does business planning facilitate the development of new ventures?* *Strategic Management Journal*, 24(12).
- De Man, A. (2004), *The networked economy: Strategy, structure and management*, Cheltenham, UK: Edgar Elgar.
- Dennis, C. (2000), *Networking for marketing advantage*, *Management Decision*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 287-92.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.), SAGE Publications.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023, July 27), *Performance of MSMEs in Malaysia*, Retrieved from https://storage.dosm.gov.my/gdp/msme_2023.pdf, assessed on 10th November 2024.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023), *Economic Census 2023: Profile of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia*, Retrieved from dosm.gov.my.
- Desanctis, G. & Fulk J. (Eds.). (1999.), *Shaping organisational form: Communication, connection, and community*, Newbury Park: California: Sage.

De Wolf, P. & Schoorlemmer, H. (eds.) (2007), *Exploring the significance of entrepreneurship in agriculture*. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture. Frick, Switzerland. Retrieved from <http://www.esofarmers.org/es-publications.html>

DeTienne, D.R. & Chandler, G.N. (2004), *Opportunity identification and its role in the entrepreneurial classroom: A pedagogical approach and empirical test*, *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 3 (3), 242-257.

Department for Business Innovation & Skills. (2013), *Small Business Survey 2012. Growth Special Report*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/204183/bis-13-883-small-business-survey-2012-growth-special-report.pdf

Dhamodharan, V., & Sundari, M. (2011), *Augmenting Entrepreneurship among Management Graduates*. *Bonfring International Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management Science*, 1 (Inaugural Special Issue), 17-19.

Din, B., Anuar, A.R. and Usman, M. (2016), *Does the entrepreneurship education matters in enhancing entrepreneurial skill among students in Malaysian public universities?*, *International Review of Management and Marketing*, Vol. 6 No. S7, pp. 107-111.

Doern, R. (2016), *Entrepreneurship and crisis management: The experiences of small businesses during the London 2011 riots*, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 34(3), 276-302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614553863>

Donker, J., Donkor, G. N. A., & Kwarteng, C. K. (2018), *Strategic planning and performance of SMEs in Ghana*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 12(1), 62-76.

Donne, J. (n.d.). *Meditation XVII*. Retrieved from <https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/meditation17.php>, assessed on 1st February 2024.

Drucker, P. F. (1970). *Entrepreneurship in Business Enterprise*. *Journal of Business Policy*, 1(1), 3-13.

Duchesneau, D.A. & Gartner, W.B. (1990), *A profile of new venture success and failure in an emerging industry*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 5, 297-312. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0883-9026\(90\)90007-G](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0883-9026(90)90007-G)

Dyer, J. H., & Singh, H. (1998), *The relational view: Cooperative strategy and sources of interorganizational competitive advantage*, *Academy of Management Review*, 23(4), 660-679.

Easton, Geoff (1992), *Industrial Networks : a review*, London: Routledge.

Easton, Geoff and Luis Araujo (1994), *Market Exchange, Social Structures and Time*, *European Journal of Marketing*, 28 (3), 72-84.

Ehrlichman, David (2021), *Impact Networks: Create Connection, Spark Collaboration, And Catalyze Systematic Change*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Ellis, Nick, Michel Rod, Tim Beal, and Val Lindsay (2012), *Constructing identities in Indian networks: Discourses of marketing management in inter-organisational relationships*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 41, 402-12.

Eriksson K, Johanson J, Majkgård A, et al. (1997), *Experiential knowledge and cost in the internationalization process*, *Journal of International Business Studies* 28(2): 337–360.

Ernst, D. & Bamford, J. (2005), *Your alliances are too stable*, *Harvard Business Review*, 83(6):133-141.

Faltin, G. (2001), *Creating a culture of innovative entrepreneurship*. *Journal of International Business and Economy*, 123-140. Retrieved from http://www.fufaltin.de/pdf/jibe_offprint.pdf

Faltin, G. (2007), *Erfolgreich gründen: Der Unternehmer als Künstler und Komponist. [Being successful in starting up a business – The entrepreneur as artist and composer]* Berlin: DIHK Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag.

Faltin, G. (2008), *Kopf schlägt Kapital: Die ganz andere Art, ein Unternehmen zu gründen. Von der Lust, ein Entrepreneur zu sein. [Go with your head – An unusual way to start a business. About the passion of being an entrepreneur]* München: Carl Hanser Verlag. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3139/9783446418059>

Farinda, A. G., Kamarulzaman, Y., Abdullah, A., & Admad, S.Z. (2009), *Building Business Networking: A Proposed Framework for Malaysian SMEs*, *International Review of Business Research Papers*, 5(2), 151-160.

Fazal, F., Muddat, M., & Zainal, R. (2021), *The role of entrepreneurial competencies in SME performance*, International Journal of Business Studies, 12(3), 215–230.

Fernandes, N. (2020), *Economic effects of coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) on the world economy*, Nuno Fernandes Full Professor of Finance IESE Business School Spain. SSRN Electronic Journal, ISSN 1556-5068, Elsevier BV, 0-29.

<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3557504>

Fernández-Serrano, J., & Romero, I. (2013), *Entrepreneurial quality and regional development: Characterizing SME sectors in low income areas*, Papers in Regional Science, 92(3), 495-513. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1435-5957.2012.00421.x>

Fiet, J. O. (2001), *The pedagogical side of entrepreneurship theory*, Journal of Business Venturing, 16(2): 101-117.

Fitriany, F., Halim, S.E., Rahman, M.A, & Suwandaru, R. (2023), *Analysis of the influence of Entrepreneurial and Networking Competitive Advantage on Business Performance with Use of Digital Marketing as a Moderating on Agricultural SME's in Makassar City*, Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA, 9(SpecialIssue), 893–900. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v9iSpecialIssue.6342>

Flick, U. (2022), *An introduction to qualitative research* (7th ed.), SAGE Publications.

Ford, David (1980), *The Development of Business Relationships in Industrial Markets*, European Journal of Marketing, 14, 291-353.

Ford, I.D. (1998), *Managing business-relationships*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Ford, David (2002), *Distribution, Internationalisation and Networks*, International Marketing Review, 19 (3), 225-35.

Ford, David, Laas-Eric Gadde, Haken Hakansson, and Ivan Snehota (2002), *Managing Networks*, in Proceedings in the 18th Annual Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference. Perth, Australia.

Ford, David, Lars-Eric Gadde, Haken Hakenson, and Ivan Snehota (1998), *Managing Business Relationships* (1st ed.). London: Wiley.

Ford, D., Gadde, L. E., Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (2002), *Managing Networks: Insights from Business Marketing*, Routledge.

Ford, David and Håken Håkansson (2006), *IMP - some things achieved: much more to do*, *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (3/4), 248-58

Ford, D., Gadde, L. E., Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (2002), *Managing Networks: Insights from Business Marketing*, Routledge.

Fraser, G.C. (2004), *Success Runs in Our Race: The Complete Guide to Effective Networking in the Black Community*, New York: Asmistad.

Freiling, J. & Laudien, S.M. (2013), *Explaining new venture failure: A competence-based Approach*, Conference Paper AIMS 2013, 1-7. Retrieved from http://cdiaims2013.sciencesconf.org/conference/cdiaims2013/pages/cdiaims2013_Freiling_Laudien.pdf

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2021), *Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research Revisited*, *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2247-2260.

Gadde, Laas-Eric and Lars-Gunnar Mattsson (1987), *Stability and Change in Network Relationships*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 4, 29-41.

Gadde, Laas-Erik and Hakan Hakansson (2007), *Business Relationships and Resource Combining*, *The IMP Journal*, 2 (1), 31-45.

Gadde, L. E., Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (2021), *Managing business networks: An interactive perspective*, Routledge.

Gadde, L. E., Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (2021). *Interactive Networks and Business Markets: The Role of Relational Interdependencies*. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 93, 110-125.

Gaddefors, J. and Anderson, A.R. (2017), *Entrepreneursheep and context: when entrepreneurship is greater than entrepreneurs*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 267-278.

Gaglio, C.M. & Katz, J.A. (2001), *The psychological basis of opportunity identification: Entrepreneurial alertness*, *Journal of Small Business Economics*, 16, 95-111. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1011132102464>

- Galaskiewicz, Joseph (1985), *Professional networks and Institutionalisation*, *American Sociology Review*, 50, 693-58.
- Galaskiewicz, Joseph (1996), *The New Network Analysis in Networks and Marketing*, Dawn Iacobucci, ed. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Galindo-martín, M. Á., & Méndez-picazo, M. T. (2016), *Journal of Innovation Conceptual article and entrepreneurship*, 1, 62-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.01.006>
- Galkina T and Chetty S (2015), *Effectuation and networking of internationalizing SMEs*, *Management International Review* 55(5): 647–676.
- Galkina, T., & Jack, S. (2020), *The synergy of causation and effectuation in the process of entrepreneurial networking: Implication for opportunity development*, *International Small Business Journal*, 38(5), 399–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242619892793>
- Gartner, W. B. (1988), *Who is an entrepreneur? Is the wrong question*, *American Journal of Small Business*, 12, 11–32.
- Gartner, W. B. (2004), *The edge defines the (w)hole: Saying what entrepreneurship is (not)*. In D.Hjorth and C. Steyaert (Eds.), *Narrative and Discursive Approaches in Entrepreneurship*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 245–254.
- Gartner, W. B. (2008), *Variations in entrepreneurship*, *Small Business Economics*, 31, 351–361.
- Gartner, W. B. (2010), *A new path to the waterfall: A narrative on a use of entrepreneurial narrative*, *International Small Business Journal*, 28, (1), 6–19.
- Gartner, W. B., Bird, B. J., and Starr J. (1992), *Acting as if: Differentiating entrepreneurial from organizational behavior*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 16, 13–32.
- Gartner, W. B. (2022), *Entrepreneurship as Organizing: Selected Papers of William B. Gartner*, Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Garton, L., Haythornthwaite, C. & Wellman, B. (1997), *Studying online social networks*, [online] <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol3/issue1/garton.html>. Accessed 01 March 2023.
- Geertz, C. (1983), *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books.

GEM (2018), *Global entrepreneurship monitor global report 2017/18*, available at: [//C:/Users/3350/Downloads/gem-2017-2018-global-report-web-310118-1517325493.pdf](http://C:/Users/3350/Downloads/gem-2017-2018-global-report-web-310118-1517325493.pdf).

Gemünden, H.G., Ritter, T. & Walter, A. (Eds.) (1997), *Relationships and networks in international markets*, Oxford, UK: Pergamon.

Gerschewski S, Rose EL and Lindsay VJ (2015), Understanding the drivers of international performance for born global firms: An integrated perspective, *Journal of World Business* 50(3): 558–575.

Ghuri, P., & Gronhaug, K. (2005). *Research Methods in Business Studies: A Practical Guide (3rd ed.)*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Gibson, C., Hardy III, J., & Buckley, M.R. (2014), *Understanding the role of networking in organizations*, *Career Development International*, 19(2), 146-161.

Gilbert, B. A., McDougall, P. P., & Audretsch, D. B. (2006), *New venture growth: A review and extension*, *Journal of Management*, 32(6), 926–950. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206306293860>

Gilmore, Audrey, David Carson, and Ken Grant (2001), *SME Marketing in Practice*, *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 19 (1), 6.11.

Gilmore, A., Carson, D. and Rocks, S. (2006), *Networking in SMEs: evaluating its contribution to marketing activity*, *International Business Review*, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 278-293.

Globe Newswire (2021), *Global Social Networking Platforms Market (2021 to 2026) - Featuring Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter Among Others*, Research and Market, assessed via <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2021/08/27/2287644/28124/en/Global-Social-Networking-Platforms-Market-2021-to-2026-Featuring-Facebook-Pinterest-and-Twitter-Among-Others.html> on 3 September 2023.

Gloor, P. A., Woerner, S., Schoder, D., Fischbach, K., & Fronzetti Colladon, A. (2021), *Size does not matter—in the virtual world. Comparing online social networking behaviour with business success of entrepreneurs*, <https://arxiv.org/abs/2105.09546>

González-gonzález, J. M., Bretones, F. D., Zarco, V., & Rodríguez, A. (2011), *Women ' s Studies International Forum Women, immigration and entrepreneurship in Spain : A confluence of debates in the face of a complex reality*, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(5), 360-370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2011.05.007>.

Goodell, J. W. (2020), *COVID-19 and finance: Agendas for future research*, Finance Research Letters, 35(April). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2020.101512>.

Gössling, T. (2004), *Proximity, trust and morality in networks*, European Planning Studies, Vol. 12 No. 5, pp. 675-689.

Greene, P. G., & Brown, T.E. (1997), *Resource needs and the dynamic capitalism*, Lok Sahitya Kendra, Jodhpur, India. *Management Perspectives*, Oxford and IBH Pvt. New Delhi. *Management*, 17(1): 99-120.

Granovetter, M. (1973), *The strength of weak ties*, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78 No. 6, pp. 1360-80.

Granovetter, M. (1982), *The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited*, In P.V. Marsden and N. Lin, eds., *Social Structure and Network Analysis*. Beverly Hills, California, Sage, pp. 105-130.

Granovetter, M. (1985), *Economic action and social structure: a theory of embeddedness*, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 91, pp. 481-510.

Granovetter, M. (2005), *The impact of social structure on economic outcomes*, Journal of Economic Perspectives, 19(1), 33-50. <https://doi.org/10.1257/0895330053147958>

Gray, C. (2002), *Entrepreneurship, resistance to change and growth in small firms*, Journal of Small Business and Enterprise, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 61-72.

Gray, C. (2009), *E-governance issues in small and medium-sized enterprises*, E-Governance, Managing or Governing?, Routledge, New York, NY.

Greve, Arent og Lene Foss (1990), *Nettverk og entreprenørskap*, En empirisk undersøkelse av sosiale nettverk og etablering av bedrifter.

Greve, Arent (1993), *Network Analysis: Concept and Measures*, Foundation for Research and Business Administration. Bergen, Senter for næringsøkonomisk forskning. Report no. 93.

Greve, Arent and Urs. E. Gattiker (1994), *Entrepreneurs: Becoming a Member or Being a Member of Business Networks*, Paper, University of Lethbridge, Canada and The Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Bergen, Norway.

Greve, Arent (1995a), *Organisasjonsteori, nyere perspektiver*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Greve, Arent (1995b), *Networks and Entrepreneurship - an Analysis of Social Relations, Occupational Background, and the Use of Contacts During the Establishment Process*, Scandinavian Journal of Management. Vol. 11(1): 1-24.

Greve, Arent and Urs. E. Gattiker (1998), *Networks and The Entrepreneurship Process: A Study of Communication Activities and Structure*, Paper, University of Lethbridge, Canada and The Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Bergen, Norway.

Grix, J. (2004), *The Foundations of Research*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gruszczyński, W. (2005), *Small enterprises' cooperation groups. Importance of personal relationships in small enterprises' cooperation*, Paper delivered at the 4th International Conference of Entrepreneurship – Employment and Beyond, September 8-9, 2005. Sodertörns Högskola University College, Stockholm Sweden.

Guan, D., Wang, D., Hallegatte, S., Davis, S. J., Huo, J., Li, S., Bai, Y., Lei, T., Xue, Q., Coffman, D. M., Cheng, D., Chen, P., Liang, X., Xu, B., Lu, X., Wang, S., Hubacek, K., & Gong, P. (2020), *Global supply-chain effects of COVID-19 control measures*, Nature Human Behaviour, 4(6), 577-587. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0896-8>.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981), *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results Through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020), *A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research*, PLOS ONE, 15(5), e0232076.

Gulati, R., & Turco, C. (2022), *Networks, Trust, and Entrepreneurial Success: Understanding Social Capital in Business Ecosystems*, Harvard Business Review Press.

Gulati, R., & Turco, C. (2022), *Networks, Trust, and Entrepreneurial Success: Understanding Social Capital in Business Ecosystems*, Harvard Business Review Press.

Gummesson, Evert (1995), *Relationship Marketing*, European Journal of Marketing, 29 (5), 76-78.

Gummesson, Evert (2008), *Total Relationship Marketing*. Burlington MA: Butterworth Heinemann.

Gupta VK and Batra S (2016), *Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance in Indian SMEs: Universal and contingency perspectives*, International Small Business Journal 34(5): 660–682.

Gupta, Namrata, and Anita Mirchandani, (2018), *Investigating entrepreneurial success factors of women-owned SMEs in UAE*, *Management Decision* 56: 219–32.

Gyepi-Garbrah, T., & Binfor, F. (2013), *An analysis of internal environment of a commercial oriented research organization: Using McKinsey 7S framework in Ghanaian context*, *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 3(9), 87-103. doi:10.6007/IJARBSS/v3-i9/192

Gyimah, K. N., Owiredu, A., & Antwi, F. (2020), *Effects of entrepreneurial trait on the success*, *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 9(3), 7177-7186

Haeffele, S., Hobson, A., & Storr, V. H. (2020), *Coming Back from Covid-19: Lessons in Entrepreneurship from Disaster Recovery Research*, *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3592966>

Hägg, G. and Gabrielsson, J. (2019), *A systematic literature review of the evolution of pedagogy in entrepreneurial education research*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 829-861, doi: 10.1108/IJEBR-04-2018-0272.

Håkansson, Håken Ed. (1987), *Industrial Technology Development: A Network Approach*, London: Croom Helm.

Håkansson, Håken (1982), *International Marketing and Purchasing of Industrial Goods: An Interaction Approach*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Håkansson, Håkan and Jan Johanson (1993), *The network as a governance structure, in The Embedded Firm - on the socioeconomics of industrial networks*, Ggernot Grabher, ed. London: Routledge

Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. (1995), *Analysing business relationships*, in Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. (Eds), *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*, Routledge, London, pp. 24-29.

Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (1995), *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*, Routledge.

Håkansson, H., Ford, D., Gadde, L. E., Snehota, I., & Waluszewski, A. (2009), *Business in networks*, Wiley.

Hallen, B. L., Katila, R., & Rosenberger, J. D. (2020), *How Do Entrepreneurs Build and Rebuild Networks? A Process Model of Trust Development in New Ventures*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 420-448.

Hamim, H., Abdul Kadir, M.N. and Mohd Shariff, M.N. (2021), *SMEs Retailing in Malaysia: Challenges for Industrial Revolution 4.0 Implementation*, Sergi, B.S. and Jaaffar, A.R. (Ed.) *Modeling Economic Growth in Contemporary Malaysia (Entrepreneurship and Global Economic Growth)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-806-420211002>

Hanna, V. and Walsh, K. (2008), *Interfirm cooperation among small manufacturing firms*, *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 299-321.

Haneberg, D. H. (2019), *Entrepreneurial learning as an effectual process*, *Learning Organization*, 26(6), 631-647. 136 Received: November 13, 2021 / Approved: February 18, 2022 Pages: 119-140 eISSN: 2600-5743 <https://doi.org/10.1108/TLO-04-2018-0064>

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006), *Sustainable leadership*, John Wiley & Sons.

Harrison, J. D., Patel, R., & Clarke, P. (2022), *Emotional intelligence and business networking: The role of interpersonal communication in entrepreneurial success*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 31(3), 315-339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09713557221101234>

Hartley, J. (2004), *Case Studies in Organizational Research. An Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, London: Sage Publications.

Hashim, F. (2012), *Challenges for the internationalization of SMEs and the role of government: The case of Malaysia*, *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(13), 60-71.

Hassan N.A., Abdullah A. and Ismail M.M. (2018), *Business Networking and Social Cohesion among Business Community in Malaysia*, *International Journal of Asian Social*, Vol. 8 (9): 669-676

Hassan, S., & Shahzad, M. (2021), *The impact of social media usage on small and micro-enterprises: Evidence from Malaysia*, Retrieved from EconStor.

Hassan, R. (2022), *The Role of Business Networks in Malaysian SME Competitiveness*, *Malaysian Journal of Economic Policy*, 57(3), 147-160.

Hassan, R., Ismail, S., & Chong, L. (2023), *Networking Strategies and SME Performance: Insights from Malaysia's Entrepreneurial Landscape*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Research*, 12(1), 89-110.

Hernandez, C. and Gonzalez, D. (2016), *Study of the start-up ecosystem in Lima, Peru : collective case study*, *Latin American Business Review*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 115-137, doi: 10.1080/10978526.2016.1171678.

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959), *The motivation to work*, John Wiley & Sons.

Henneberg, Stephan, Stephanos Mouzas, and Peter Naude (2006), *Network Pictures - Concepts and Representations*, *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (3/4), 408-29.

Hennink, M. M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022), *Sample Sizes for Saturation in Qualitative Research: A Systematic Review of Empirical Tests*, *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, 114523.

Hevia, C., & Neumeyer, A. (2020), *A conceptual framework for analyzing the economic impact of COVID-19 and its policy implications*. 1, 1-19.

Hirschman, A.O. (1958), *The strategy of Economic Development*, London, Yale University Press.

Hindle, K. (2000), *An empirical and logical exploration of the strategic compatibility of best practice and product innovation: preliminary insights from Australian and New Zealand manufacturing industry*, In *AMS 2000: Developments in marketing science*, volume XXIII: proceedings of the annual conference of the Academy of Marketing Science, 1-16. Montreal, May 24-27, 2000.

Hinterhuber, A., & Liozu, S. M. (2020), *Pricing and the Sales Force*, Routledge.

Hinterhuber, A., & Liozu, S. M. (2021), *The Power of Networks: Market Adaptation through Business Collaboration*, Routledge.

Hisrich, R.D. (1990). *Entrepreneurship/Intrapreneurship*. *American Psychologist*, 45 (2), 209-222. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.45.2.209>

Hirsch P, Lounsbury M (1997), *Ending the family quarrel: towards a reconciliation of "old" and "new" institutionalism*, *Am. Behav. Sci.*, 40: 406–418.

Hitt, M.A., Ireland, R.D., Camp, S.M. & Sexton, D.L. (2002), *Strategic entrepreneurship – creating a new mindset*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Hoffman, A. N., & Schlosser, R. (2001), *Success factors of strategic alliances in small and medium-sized enterprises—An empirical survey*, Long Range Planning, 34(3), 357–381. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301\(01\)00041-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301(01)00041-7)

Hollenbeck, Candice R., George M. Zinkhan, Warren French, and Ji Hee Song (2009), *E-Collaborative Networks: a case study on the new role of the salesforce*, Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 2, 125-36

Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. MA: Addison-Wesley.

Hornaday, J.A. and About, J. (1971), Characteristics of Successful Entrepreneurs. Personell Psychology, Vol. 24, Summer, Pp. 141-153.

Holmen, E., Pedersen A-C. & Torvatn, T. (2005), *Building relationships for technological innovation*, Journal of Business Research. 58(9):1240-1250.

Holmlund, Maria and Jan-Ake Törnroos (1997), *What are Relationships in Business Networks?*, "Management Decision, 35 (4), 304-09.

Hoq, M. Z., Ha, N. C., & Said, S. M. (2009), *SME development in Malaysia: A study on the challenges to growth*, African Journal of Business Management, 3(2), 96-106.

Huang, Hung Chen, Kestutis Bruzga, and Ya PingWang. (2011), *Business key success factors in China and the West*, African Journal of Business Management 5: 9363–69.

Hunt SD (2000), *A General Theory of Competition: Resources, Competences, Productivity, Economic Growth*, London: Sage.

Husain, N.A., Rashid, I.M.A., Norhisham, N., Noor, N.H.M., and Kamarolzaman, N. (2023), The Effect of Conceptual Factors on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Business Success in Malaysia, Information Management and Business Review, Vol. 15, No. 4(SI), pp.264-274.

Hussain, S., & Scott, M. (2023), *Social capital and entrepreneurial success: The role of strong vs. weak ties in resource acquisition*, Small Business Economics, 61(3), 321-342. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-023-00791-2>

Hussain A., Ahmad, S.A., Mia, S., Ahmed, F. and Prommee, P., (2024), *Relationship between business information, business networking, access to finance and financial performance of social enterprises: Perspective of resource-based view and signalling theory*, Cogent Business & Management.

Iacobucci, Dawn Ed. (1996), *Networks in Marketing (1st ed.)*, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.

Iacobucci, Dawn and Gilbert A. Churchill (2002), *Marketing Research Methodological Foundations (8th ed.)*, Orlando FL: Harcourt.

Iacobucci, Dawn and Nigel Hopkins (1992), *Modelling dyadic interactions and networks in marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29 (1).

Ibrahim, B. (2019), *The impact of strategic planning on growth of small businesses in Nigeria*, *SEISENSE Journal of Management*, 2(1), 69-84.

IMP (2009), *About the IMP Group*, (accessed 27.06.10, 2009), [available at <http://www.impgroup.org/about.php>].

Iqbal, M., & Mansoor, A. Z. (2022), Proposed Strategy for Family Business Internal Management Professionalization Effort (Case Study: CV. Segara Luas Lestari), *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 7(4), 133–138. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejbmr.2022.7.4.1513>

Isenberg, D.J. (2010), *How to start an entrepreneurial revolution*, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 88, No. 6, pp. 40-50.

Jack, S., Moulton, S., Anderson, A., & Dodd, S. (2010), *An entrepreneurial network evolving: Patterns of change*, *International Small Business Journal*, 28(4), 315-337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242610363525>

Jack, S. L., Anderson, A. R., & Drakopoulou Dodd, S. (2022), *Entrepreneurial Networking: Theories and Evidence from Business Practice*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(1), 98-123.

Jacobsen, L.K. (2003), *Bestimmungsfaktoren für Erfolg im Entrepreneurship. Entwickelungeines umfassenden theoretischen Modells. [Determinants of success factors in entrepreneurship. The development of a comprehensive theoretical model*, Ph.D dissertation. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.

Javier, O., Méndez, M., Paz, E. Á., Jasive, S., & Martínez, S. (2021), *Micro Entrepreneurs Under Covid-19*, *TELOS: Revista de Estudios Interdisciplinarios En Ciencias Sociales*, 23(1), 67-84. <https://doi.org/10.36390/telos231.06>

Jenssen, J.I. (1999), *Entrepreneurial Networks*, Phd Thesis, Agder College, Oregon State University, College of Business.

Jiménez-Zarco, A. I. (2012), *Entrepreneurship in times of crisis: innovative entrepreneurship as a basis for value generation*, VIII Congreso Vitruel, Emprendimiento, PIMEs y Gestion Del Conocimiento.

[http://soda.ustadistancia.edu.co/enlinea/paginaimagenes/documentos/documentos/Emprender En Tipos De Crisis El Emprendimiento Innovador Como Base De Generacion De Valor.pdf](http://soda.ustadistancia.edu.co/enlinea/paginaimagenes/documentos/documentos/Emprender%20En%20Tipos%20De%20Crisis%20El%20Emprendimiento%20Innovador%20Como%20Base%20De%20Generacion%20De%20Valor.pdf)

Jeon, I.O. (2012), *Established business start-up support Impact on the youth of business performance*, Journal of Digital Convergence, Vol. 10 No. 11, pp. 103-114.

Jiang, Zhizhong, Stephan Henneberg, and Peter Naude (2009), *Relationships in Business Markets: An Empirical Examination of Trust, Reliance and Commitment*, in 25th Annual IMP Conference. Marseille.

Johannisson, Bengt (1984), *A Cultural Perspectives on Small Business - Local Business Climate*, International Small Business Journal, vol. 2, no.4.

Johannisson, Bengt (1986), *Network strategies: Management Technology for Entrepreneurship and Change*, International Small Business Journal, vol. 5, no. 1.

Johannisson, Bengt (1988), *Business Formation - A Network Approach*, Scandinavian Journal of Management, vol. 4, no 3/4.

Johannisson, Bengt (1990), *Economies of Overview - Guiding the External Growth of Small Firms*, International Small Business Journal, Vol. 9. No.1.

Johannisson, Bengt og Johnsson, T. (1988), *Företagsetablering i nät - en regional studie av kontacters betydelse inför och under företagsetableringen*, upbliserat notat, Högskolan i Vaxjö

Johannisson, B. (2011), *Towards a practice theory of entrepreneuring*, Small Business Economics, 36(2), 135–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-009-9212-8>

Johanson J and Vahlne JE (1975), The internationalization process of the firm – A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments, Journal of International Business Studies 8(1):23–32.

Johanson, J and L G Mattsson (1992), *Network Positions and Strategic Action – an analytical framework*, in Axelsson, B and Easton, G. (Eds), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, Routledge, London, 205-17.

Johanson J and Vahlne JE (2006), *Commitment and opportunity development in the internationalization process: A note on the Uppsala internationalization process model*, *Management International Review* 46(2): 165–178.

Johanson J and Vahlne JE (2009), *The Uppsala internationalization process model revisited: From liability of foreignness to liability of outsidership*, *Journal of International Business Studies* 40(9): 1411–1431.

Johanson J and Vahlne JE (2011), *Markets as networks: Implications for strategy-making*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 39(4): 484–491.

Johanson, J., & Mattsson, L. G. (2015), *Internationalisation in industrial systems—a network approach*, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31(3), 365-379.

Johanson, J., & Mattsson, L. G. (2021), *Internationalization in Industrial Networks: Revisiting Market-as-Network Theory*, *Journal of Business Research*, 128, 120-132.

Jack, S. L., Anderson, A. R., & Drakopoulou Dodd, S. (2022), *Entrepreneurial Networking: Theories and Evidence from Business Practice*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(1), 98-123.

Jones, C., Matlay, H. and Maritz, A. (2012), *Enterprise education: for all, or just some?*, *Education + Training*, Vol. 54 Nos 8/9, pp. 813-824, doi: 10.1108/00400911211274909.

Jones MV and Coviello NE (2005), *Internationalisation: Conceptualising an entrepreneurial process of behaviour in time*, *Journal of International Business Studies* 36(3): 284–303.

Jones MV, Coviello NE and Tang YK (2011), *International entrepreneurship research (1989–2009): A domain ontology and thematic analysis*, *Journal of Business Venturing* 26(6): 632–659.

Jones, O. & Tilley, F. (Eds.), (2003), *Competitive advantage in SMEs – organising for innovation and change*, West-Sussex: John-Wiley & Sons.

Jones, B., & Simmons, K. (2023), *Entrepreneurial networks and firm performance: How resource accessibility drives business growth*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 30(2), 245-267. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-02-2023-0045>

Kahan, D. (2012), *Farm management extension guide: 5 Entrepreneurship in farming*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3231e/i3231e.pdf> [2016-01-04]

Kalnins, A., & Williams, M. (2014), *Journal of Business Venturing When do female-owned businesses out-survive male-owned businesses ? A disaggregated approach by industry and geography*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29(6), 822-835. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.12.001>

Kaplan, R. S. (2005), *How the balanced scorecard complements McKinsey's 7-S model*. *Strategy & Leadership*, 33(3), 41-46.

Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2022), *The balanced scorecard: Translating strategy into action*, Harvard Business Press.

Karami, M., & Tang, J. (2019), *Entrepreneurial orientation and SME international performance: The mediating role of networking capability and experiential learning*, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 37(2) 105-124.

Karel, S., Adam, P., & Radomir, P. (2013), *Strategic planning and business performance of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises*, *Journal of Competitiveness*, 5(4), 57-72.

Kassean, H., Vanevenhoven, J., Liguori, E. and Winkel, D.E. (2015), *Entrepreneurship education: a need for reflection, real-world experience and action*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 690-708, doi: 10.1108/IJEBr-07-2014-0123.

Kaur, D. (2017), *Poor planning main cause for SMEs to cease operation*, Retrieved November 4, 2021, from The Malaysian Reserve Web site: <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2017/11/22/poor-planning-main-cause-smes-cease-operation/>

Kelly, D. (1999), *Researching Industrial Relations*, New South Wales: The Federation Press.

Kent, C.A. (1982), *Entrepreneurship in Economic Development*. In *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, Kent, Sexton, Vesper (eds.). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall.48901. Pp. 237-257.

Khanna T (2014), *Contextual intelligence*, *Harvard Business Review* 92(9): 58–68.

- Khanna T (2015), *A case for contextual intelligence*, *Management International Review* 55(2): 181–190.
- Khokhawala, S. M., & Iyer, R. (2024), *A Comprehensive Examination of Entrepreneurial Networking Within the Indian Entrepreneurial Ecosystem*, *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, 13(2), 187-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22779779241274118>
- Khosravi, P., Newton, C., & Rezvani, A. (2022), *Digital transformation and COVID-19: The emergence of digital platforms for entrepreneurial networking*, *Journal of Business Research*, 142, 112-123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.01.036>
- Kim, J., & Park, S. (2023), *Building resilience through teamwork: The role of collaboration in entrepreneurial ecosystems*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 29(4), 568-587. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-01-2023-0021>
- Kitay, J., & Callus, R. (1998), *The Role and Challenge of Case Study Design in Industrial Relations Research*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Klerk, S. D. and Kroon, J. (2008), *Business networking relationships for business success*, *S.Afr.J. Business Management* 2008, 39(2) 25.
- Klimas, P., Czakon, W., Kraus, S., Kailer, N., & Maalaoui, A. (2020), *Entrepreneurial failure: a synthesis and conceptual framework of its effects*, *European Management Review*, 1-15.
- Knight G and Cavusgil S (2004), *Innovation, organizational capabilities, and the born-global firm*, *Journal of International Business Studies* 35(2): 124–141.
- Knoke, D. (2001), *Changing Organisations: Business networks in the new political economy*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kocaoglu, B., & Demir, E. (2019), *The use of McKinsey's 7S framework as a strategic planning and economic assessment tool in the process of digital transformation*, *Pressacademia*, 9(9), 114–119. <https://doi.org/10.17261/pressacademia.2019.1078>
- Komives, J.L. (1972), *A Preliminary Study of the Personal Values of High Technology Entrepreneurs*. *Technical Entrepreneurship*, A Symposium, Eds. Copper, A.C. and J.L. Komives. Milwaukee, Center for Venture Management.

Kong, Weng Keat (2016), *The importance of customer value creation as business model for Malaysian design and build bungalow builder*, Dissertation submitted to University of Bath for the Program of Master of Science in International Construction Management, UK.

Kotter, J. P. (1996), *Leading change*, Harvard Business School Press.

Koza, M.P. and Lewin, A.Y. (1999), *The coevolution of network alliances: a longitudinal analysis of an international professional service network*, *Organization Science*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 638-653.

Kozlenkova, I. V., Samaha, S. A., & Palmatier, R. W. (2014), *Resource-based theory in marketing*. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 42(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-013-0336-7>

Kraaijenbrink, J. (2011), *Human capital in the resource-based view*. *The Oxford Handbook of Human Capital*, Retrieved from <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199532162.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199532162-e-9>

Krackhardt, David (1992), *The Strength of Strong Ties: The Importance of Philos in Organizations*, In Nohria and Eccles (1992). Pp. 216-239.

Kraus, S., & Schwarz, E. J. (2005), *The Role of Strategic Planning in SMEs: Literature Review and Implications*, *Journal for Management Theory & Practice*, 10(39), 31-38.

Kraus, S., Burtscher, J., Vallaster, C., & Angerer, M. (2018), *Sustainable entrepreneurship Orientation : A Reflection on Status-Quo Research on Factors Facilitating Responsible Managerial Practices*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020444>

Kulkarni, P.M., Kulkarni, L., Kulkarni, A.V., (2023), *Employee Motivation and Its Relationship with Online Training*, *Jindal Management Journal*, Sage Journal, Vol.13, Issue 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/22786821231201432>.

Kumar, S. (2019), *The McKinsey 7S Model helps in Strategy implementation: A Theoretical Foundation*, *Tecnia Journal of Management Studies*, 14(1), 7–12. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3993590 <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dr-Kumar->

[118/publication/357352792 The McKinsey 7S Model helps in Strategy implementation A Theoretical Foundation/links/61c9eb47da5d105e55ff83ae/The-McKins](https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2023.2167345)

Kumar, R., & Sharma, P. (2023), *Business networking and opportunity recognition: A study of high-growth entrepreneurs*, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 35(4), 311-329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2023.2167345>

Kumar, A., & Sharma, P. (2023), *The role of business networking in knowledge transfer and innovation diffusion among SMEs*, *Technovation*, 123, 102693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2023.102693>

Kuratko, D.F. and Morris, M.H. (2018), *Examining the future trajectory of entrepreneurship*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 56 No. 1, pp. 11-23, doi: 10.1111/jsbm.12364.

Kuratko, D. F., Hornsby, J. S., & Hayton, J. C. (2021), *Corporate Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurial Development Within Organizations*, Routledge.

Lalkaka, R. (2000), *Manual on Technology Business Incubators*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, available at: <https://worldbusinessincubation.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/review-of-20-business-incubation-models-lalkaka-incubator-development-model-technology-business-incubator-manual-2000-part-8-of-20/>

Lampadarios, E., N. Kyriakidou, and G. Smith. (2017), *Towards a new framework for SMEs success: A literature review*, *International Journal of Business and Globalization* 18: 194–232.

Landwehr, S. (2005), *Know-how-Management bei der Gründung innovativer Unternehmen*. [The know-how management of innovative business start-ups] Ph.D. Erlangen: Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-82052-5>

Larsson, M. & Lundberg, D. (1998), *The transparent market: Management challenges in the electronic age*, London, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Lalkaka, R. (2000), *Manual on Technology Business Incubators*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, available at: <https://worldbusinessincubation.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/review-of-20-business>

incubation-models-lalkaka-incubator-development-model-technology-business-incubator-manual-2000-part-8-of-20/

Latour, B. (2005), *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network theory*, Oxford University Press.

Latour, B. (2020), *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory (Revised Edition)*, Oxford University Press.

Lechner C and Gudmundsson SV (2014), *Entrepreneurial orientation, firm strategy and small firm performance*, International Small Business Journal 32(1): 36–60.

Lee, B., Rizal, A. M., Khalid, H., Salam, Z. A., & Sahimi, M. (2021), *Factors Influence Malaysian Small-Medium Enterprise to Engage in Facebook Marketing*, In International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences (Vol. 11, Issue 11). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v11-i11/11266>

Lee, I. and Shin, Y.J. (2018), *Fintech: ecosystem, business models, investment decisions, and challenges*, Business Horizons, Vol. 61 No. 1, pp. 35-46.

Leek, Sheena, Peter W. Turnbull, and Peter Naude (2002), *Managing Business to Business Relationships*, in Proceedings in the 18th Annual Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference. Dijon, France.

Levesque, M. and Minniti, M. (2006), *The effect of aging on entrepreneurial behavior*, Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 177-194.

Li, J., Chen, W., & Huang, Z. (2024), *How social network influences the growth of entrepreneurial enterprises: Perspective on organizational and personal networks*, SAGE Open.

Li, Jingzhi and Li, Yongzhou (2024), *Research on the Impact of Social Network Embeddedness on Returnee Innovative Behavior*, Sustainability MDPI, 16(23), 10481, ; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su162310481>

Liew, J. T. (2020), *SMEs up against a wall*, Retrieved November 11, 2021, from The Edge Markets Web site: <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/smes-against-wall>

Light, I.H. (1972), *Ethnic Enterprise in America*, Berkeley, University of California.

Liguori, E., & Winkler, C. (2020), *From Offline to Online: Challenges and Opportunities for Entrepreneurship Education Following the COVID-19 Pandemic*, *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, 3(4), 346-351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/251512742091673>

Lim, C.H., And Teoh, K.B. (2021), *Factors influencing the SME business success in Malaysia*, *Annals of Human Resource Management Research (AHRMR)*, Vol 1, No 1, 2021, 41-54, can be accessed via: <https://doi.org/10.35912/ahrmr.v1i1.380>.

Liñán, F. (2008). *Skill and value perceptions: How do they affect entrepreneurial intentions?* *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 4 (3), 257-272. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11365-008-0093-0>

Lin, F., & Jaén, I. (2020), *The Covid-19 pandemic and entrepreneurship : some reflections*, <https://doi.org/10.1108 /IJOEM-05-2020-0491>

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, SAGE Publications.

Lisa Harris, Alan Rae, Ivan Misner, (2012), *Punching above their weight: the changing role of networking in SMEs*, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 19 Issue: 2, pp.335-351.

Long, Thomas B., Arnold Looijen, and Vincent Blok, (2018), *Critical success factors for the transition to business models for sustainability in the food and beverage industry in the Netherlands*, *Journal of Cleaner Production* 175: 82–95.

Looi, K.H. (2018), *Self-direction as potential predictor of undergraduates' entrepreneurial intentions*, *Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship Development*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 243-263.

Looi, K.H. (2019), *Undergraduates' motivations for entrepreneurial intentions: the role of individualistic values and ethnicity*, *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 465-483.

Looi, K.H. (2020), *Contextual motivations for undergraduates' entrepreneurial intentions in emerging Asian economies*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 53-87, doi: 10.1177/0971355720924900.

Looi, K.H. and Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2015), *Undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intention: born or made?*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 1-20.

Looi, K.H. and Klobas, J.E. (2020), *Malaysian regulative institutional context moderating entrepreneurs' export intention*, Journal of Entrepreneurship, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 395-427, doi:10.1177/0971355720924900.

Looi, K.H., and Maritz, A. (2021), *Government institutions, entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship education programmes in Malaysia*, Education + Training, Vol.63 No.2, 2021, pp.271-291, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-07-2020-0217>

Lumpkin GT and Dess GG (1996), Clarifying the entrepreneurial orientation construct and linking it to performance, *Academy of Management Review* 21(1): 135–172.

Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008), *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lussier, R. N. (1996), *A startup business success versus failure prediction model for the retail industry*, *The Mid-Atlantic Journal of Business*, 32(2), 79-92.

Lynch, R. (2006), *Corporate Strategy*, 4th ed., Pearson Education, Harlow.

Maaodhah, N., Ramayah, T., & Cheah, J. (2021), *Entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation in Malaysian SMEs: The contingent role of business networking*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 13(3), 287-306.

Machold, Silke, Morten Huse, Alessandro Minichilli, and Mattias Nordqvist (2011), *Board Leadership and Strategy Involvement in Small Firms: A Team Production Approach*, *Corporate Governance*, 19 (4), 368-83.

Mair J, Marti I (2009), *Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh*, *J. Bus. Ventur.*, 24: 419–435

Malecki, E.J. (2018), *Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems*, *Geography Compass*, Vol. 12 No. 3, p. e12359.

Manolova, T. S., Brush, C. G., Edelman, L. F., & Elam, A. (2020), *Pivoting to stay the course: How women entrepreneurs take advantage of opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic*, *International Journal of Small Business*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242620949136>

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016), *Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies: Guided by Information Power*, *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.

Manzano-García, G., & Ayala Calvo, J. C. (2013), *Propiedades psicométricas de la Escala de Resiliencia de Connor-Davidson en una muestra de emprendedores españoles*. *Psicothema*, 25(2), 245–251. <https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2012.183>

Manzano-García, G., & Ayala-Calvo, J. C. (2020), *Entrepreneurial orientation: Its relationship with the entrepreneur's subjective success in SMEs Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 12(11), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114547>

Maritz, A. (2006), *A Cross-Tasman Perspective of Entrepreneurial Orientation of Franchisees*, *New Zealand Journal of Applied Business Research*, 5(1): 1-6.

Maritz, A. and Brown, C.R. (2013), *Illuminating the black box of entrepreneurship education programs*, *Education þ Training*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 234-252, doi: 10.1108/00400911311309305.

Maritz, A. and Donovan, J. (2015), *Entrepreneurship and innovation: setting an agenda for greater discipline contextualisation*, *Education þ Training*, Vol. 57 No. 1, pp. 74-87, doi: 10.1108/ET-02-2013-0018.

Maritz, A., Jones, C. and Shwetter, C. (2015), *The status of entrepreneurship education in Australian universities*, *Education þ Training*, Vol. 57 Nos 8/9, pp. 1020-1035, doi: 10.1108/ET-04-2015-0026.

Maritz, A., Nguyen, Q. and Bliemel, M. (2019), *Boom or bust? Embedding entrepreneurship in education in Australia*, *Education þ Training*, Vol. 61 No. 6, pp. 737-755, doi: 10.1108/ET-02-2019-0037.

Mariyati, L. I., & Chomsyatun, I. (2020), *Resiliensi Pada Pengusaha UMKM Pasca Mengalami Kebangkrutan Di Sidoarjo*, *Community Psychology" Sebuah Kontribusi Psikologi Menuju Masyarakat Berdaya Dan Sejahtera*, 217–231

Martin, GM. (2003), *British Masonic Miscellany, Part 2*, Tingling & Co.

Martínez, C. N., & Bañón, A. R. (2020), *Entrepreneurship in times of crisis: An exploratory analysis of the effects of COVID-19*. 4, 53-66. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26784/sbir.v4i2.279>

Marulanda Valencia, F. Á., Montoya Restrepo, I. A., & Vélez Restrepo, J. M. (2014), *Motivational theories in the study of entrepreneurship*, 79. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.14482/pege.36.5571>

Madsen, T. K., & Ulhøi, J. P. (2022), *Networking capabilities and entrepreneurial performance: A strategic perspective on SME development*, *Technovation*, 124, 102757. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2022.102757>

Mason, M.K. (2009), *Research on small businesses*, *Journal of Small Business*, 9 (3).

Mason, C. (2009), *Public policy support for the informal venture capital market in Europe: A critical review*, *International Small Business Journal*, 27(5), 536-556.

Mason, M.K. (2017), *Worldwide business start-ups*, available at: <http://www.moyak.com/papers/businessstartups-entrepreneurs.html> (accessed 1 June 2021).

Mason, C., & Brown, R. (2014), *Entrepreneurial ecosystems and growth-oriented entrepreneurship*, Background paper prepared for the workshop organized by the OECD LEED Programme and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260870819_ENTREPRENEURIAL_ECOSYSTEMS_AND_GROWTH_ORIENTED_ENTREPRENEURSHIP_Background_paper_prepared_for_the_workshop_organised_by_the_OECD_LEED_Programme_and_the_Dutch_Ministry_of_Economic_Affairs_on

Mata, F., Fuerst, W., & Barney, J. (1995), *Information technology and sustained of thought within industrial organization economics: Do we have a new theory of the firm?* *Journal of Management*, 17: 121-154.

Matlon, M. (2019), *What does success in business mean in the 21st Century?* Retrieved November 4, 2021, from Medium Web site: <https://medium.com/better-marketing/its-time-to-redefine-business-success-in-the-21st-century-18cc4c64d40c>

Mattson, L.G. (1997), *'Relationship marketing' and the 'markets-as-networks approach': a comparative analysis of two evolving streams of research*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 447-461.

Maxwell, J. A. (1996), *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McClelland, D. C. (1961), *The Achieving Society*. Princeton, New Jersey, Van Norstrand.

McGee, J., Thomas, H. & Wilson, D. (2005), *Strategy: Analysis and practice*, Berkshire, UK: McGraw-Hill.

McGrath H and O'Toole T (2014), *A cross-cultural comparison of the network capability development of entrepreneurial firms*, *Industrial Marketing Management* 43: 897–910.

McKibbin, W. J., & Fernando, R. (2020), *The Global Macroeconomic Impacts of COVID-19: Seven Scenarios*, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3547729>

McLoughlin, Damien and Conor Horan (2000), *Business Marketing: Perspectives from the Markets as Networks Approach*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29 (4), 285-92.

Medlin, Christopher J. (2005a), *A collaborative interest model of relational coordination and empirical results*, *Journal of Business Research*, 58 (2), 214-22.

Medlin, Christopher J. (2003a), *A Dyadic Research Program: The Interaction Possibility Space Model*, *Journal of Business to Business Marketing*.

Medlin, Christopher J. (2003b), *Relationship Performance: a Relationship Level Construct*, in *Proceedings in the 19th Annual Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference*. Lausanne, Switzerland.

Medlin, Christopher J. (2005b), *Self and Collective Interest in Business Relationships*, in *Proceedings in the 21st Annual Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference*. Rotterdam, Netherlands.

Medlin, Christopher J. and Kristian Moller (2009), *Capital Investment and Network Logic*, in *25th Annual IMP Conference*. Marseille.

Merriam, S. B. (1988), *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miles, Raymond E. and Charles C. Snow (1986), *Organisations: New Concepts for New Forms*, *California Management Review*, 28, 62-73.

Miller, D., & Friesen, P. H. (2021), *Organizations: A Quantum View*, Prentice Hall.

- Misner, Ivan and et. al. (2018), *Who's in Your Room: The Secret to Creating Your Best Life*, Indigo River Publishing, USA.
- Misner, Ivan and et al. (2017), *Networking Like a Pro: Turning Contacts into Connections*, Entrepreneur Press, USA.
- Misner, Ivan (2008), *Diversity and networking*, Entrepreneur.com, available at: www.entrepreneur.com
- Misner, Ivan and Michelle R.D. (2008), *The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies*, Green Leaf Group Book Press, USA.
- Misner, Ivan and Don Morgan (2000), *Masters of Networking: Building Relationships for Your Pocketbook and Soul*, Bard Press, USA.
- Misner, Ivan and Virginia Devine (1999), *The World's Best Known Marketing Secret: Building Your Business with Word-of-Mouth Marketing*, USA.
- Misner, Ivan and Robert Davis (1998), *Business by Referral : A Sure-Fire Way to Generate New Business*, USA.
- Misner, I. & Macedonio, M. (2011), *The World's Best Known Marketing Secret: Building Your Business By Referral*, Austin: The Donohue Group, Inc.
- Misner, I., & Abouchacra, O. (2020), *Work your network with the 4Cs: Turn every handshake into a steady stream of referrals*, Ivan Misner.
- Misner, I., Davies, G., & Lewis, J. (2020), *Infinite legacy: The 7 principles of creating a lasting impact with your life*, Ivan Misner.
- Misner, I., & Phillips, D. T. (2020), *The 3rd paradigm: A radical shift to greater success*, Ivan Misner.
- Misner, I., Emery, S., & Hardy, D. (2022), *Who's in your room? Revised and updated: The question that will change your life*, Ivan Misner.
- Misner, I., Weihmiller, G., & Skrob, R. (2020), *The connector effect: The proven way to grow your business right now*, Ivan Misner.

Minniti, M., & Lévesque, M. (2008), *Recent developments in the economics of entrepreneurship*, *Journal of Business venturing*, 23(6): 603-612.

Minniti, M., & Naudé, W. (2010), *What do we know about the patterns and determinants of female entrepreneurship across countries & quest*, *European Journal of Development Research*, 22(3): 277-293.

Mitchell, J.C. (1962), *The Concept and Use of Social Networks*. In William M. Evan (1976): *Interorganizational Relations*, Selected Readings. Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mitchell, M.L. & Jolley, J.M. (2007), *Research Design Explained (Sixth Edition)*, California: Thomson Wadsworth, p.249.

Mohamad, N., Lim, H.-E., Yusof, N. and Soon, J.-J. (2015), *Estimating the effect of entrepreneur education on graduates' intention to be entrepreneurs*, *Education + Training*, Vol. 57 Nos 8/9, pp. 874-890, doi: 10.1108/ET-03-2014-0030.

Mohamad, A., Mustapa, A.N. and Razak, H.A. (2021), *An Overview of Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises: Contributions, Issues, and Challenges*, Sergi, B.S. and Jaaffar, A.R. (Ed.) *Modeling Economic Growth in Contemporary Malaysia (Entrepreneurship and Global Economic Growth)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 31-42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-806-420211004>

Mohamed, Z., Rezai, G., Shamsudin, M.N. and Mahmud, M.M. (2012), *Enhancing young graduates' intention towards entrepreneurship development in Malaysia*, *Education + Training*, Vol. 54 No. 7, pp. 605-618, doi: 10.1108/00400911211265648.

Mohd Hidzir P.N., Ismail, Shafinar, & Kassim, E.S. (2024), *The Drivers of Social Enterprise Performance in Malaysia: Social Innovation as a Mediator*, Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, AIP Conference Proceedings.

Mohd Rifin M.H., Lyndon N., Abdullah A., Dabai U.I. and Awang Pawi A.Z.B. (2023), *Malay Entrepreneurs' Narrative of a Social Network through the Phenomenological Approach*, *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, <https://doi.org/10.55463/hkjss.issn.1021-3619.62.4>

Mohd Rifin, S. et al. (2023), *The Impact of Social Networks on Business Growth: A Case Study of Malaysian SMEs*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*, 39(4), 200-220.

- Moorman, C., Deshpande, R. and Zaltman, G. (1993), *Factors affecting trust in market research relationships*, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 57 (January), pp. 81-101.
- Morrison, A., Breen, J. and Ali, S. (2003), *Small business growth: intention, ability and opportunity*, Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 417-425, doi: 10.1111/1540-627X.00092.
- Morville, P. 2002. 'Semantic Studios – social network analysis'. [online] <http://www.semanticstudios.com/publications/semantics/000006.php>. Accessed 12 Jan 2023.
- Mowery, D.C. and Shane, S. (2002), *Introduction to the special issue on university entrepreneurship and technology transfer*, Management Science, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 5-9.
- Murad, M., Li, C., Javed, H., Hassan H. and Islam, M.U. (2024), *Unravelling the relationship between entrepreneurial networks and entrepreneurial ambidexterity: A mediation-moderation model*, Science Direct, accessed via <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11219973/pdf/main.pdf>
- Mujtaba, B.G. (Ed.), (2015), *Gender, Education, and Employment Developments in South Asia: A Review of Progress in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, ILEAD Academy, FL.
- Mujtaba, B.G. (2019), *Leadership orientation of Afghan and Japanese respondents: a study of 'Guzara' or getting along in Asia*, Information Management and Business Review, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 24-39, available at: <https://ojs.amhinternational.com/index.php/imbr/article/view/2845/1851>.
- Mujtaba, B.G., Chinta, R. and Seyoum, B. (2020), *The link between leadership styles and barriers to entrepreneurship among women*, Journal of Academy of Business and Economics, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 33-48.
- Mustafa, M.J., Ernesto, H., Christopher, M. and Lai, K.C. (2016), *Entrepreneurial intentions of university students in an emerging economy*, Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 162-179, doi: 10.1108/JEEE-10-2015-0058.
- Mustafa, M., Coetzer, A., Ramos, H.M., and Fuhrer, J. (2021), *Exploring the effects of small and medium sized enterprise employee' job satisfaction on their innovative work behaviours: the moderating effects of personality*, Journal of Organizational Effectiveness People and Performance.

Muthusamy, S.K. & White, M.A. (2006.), *Does power sharing matter? The role of power and influence in alliance performance*, Journal of Business Research. [online] http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob. Accessed 1 Apr 2023].

Nabi, G., Li~nan, F., Fayolle, A., Krueger, N. and Walmsley, A. (2017), *The impact of entrepreneurship education in higher education: a systematic review and research agenda*, The Academy of Management Learning and Education, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 277-299, doi: 10.5465/amle.2015.0026

Naipitin, T., Kojchavivong, S. Kowittayakorn, V., & Sakolnakorn, V. (2014), *MicKinsey 7S Model for supply chain management of local SMEs construction business in upper northeast region of Thailand*, Asian Social Science, 10(8), 35-41. doi:10.5539/ass.v10n8p35.

Nahapiet J and Ghoshal S (1998), *Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage*, Academy of Management Review 23(2): 242–266.

Nasip, S., Amirul, S.R., Sondoh, S.L. Jr and Tanakinjal, G.H. (2017), *Psychological characteristics and entrepreneurial intention: a study among university students in North Borneo, Malaysia*, Education & Training, Vol. 59 Nos 7/8, pp. 825-840, doi: 10.1108/ET-10-2015-0092.

Nassif, M. J., Lopes, J., & Falce, L. (2020), *Entrepreneurship and small business in the context of post covid-19: is there light at the end of the tunnel?* Iberoamerican Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 1-6. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14211/regepe.v9i3.1940>

Naudé, P., Zaefarian, G., Tavani, Z. N., Neghabi, S., & Zaefarian, R. (2014), *The influence of network effects on SME performance*, Industrial Marketing Management, 43(4), 630-641. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2014.02.004>

Nazaruddin I., Utami E.R. and Rahmawati E., (2024), *Digitalization Challenges for SMEs: A Systematic Literature Review Perspective and Future Research*, JBTI, Vol. 15(1): 15-43, DOI: 10.18196/jbti.v15i1.20410

Neck, H.M. and Corbett, A.C. (2018), *The scholarship of teaching and learning entrepreneurship*, Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 8-41.

Neergaard, H., Shaw, E. and Carter, S. (2005), *The impact of gender, social capital and networks on business ownership: a research agenda*, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, Vol. 11 No. 5, pp. 338-57.

Negandhi, A.H. (1980), *Interorganisation Theory*, Kent OH: Kent State University Press.
Ng, Hee Song, and Daisy Hui Hung Kee. (2012), *The issues and development of critical success factors for the SME success in a developing country*, *International Business Management* 6: 680–91.

Nguyen, L. T., & Tran, P. Q. (2022), *The McKinsey 7S framework and business agility: A study of networking strategies in SMEs*, *Journal of Business Strategy*, 44(2), 197-219.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-10-2022-0223>

Nguyen, L. T., & Tran, P. Q. (2022), *The McKinsey 7S framework and skill transfer in entrepreneurial networks: A study of business sustainability*, *Journal of Business Strategy*, 43(5), 274-292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-09-2022-0196>

Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., Agha, M., & Agha, R. (2020), *The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review*, *International Journal of Surgery*, 78(April), 185-193.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijssu.2020.04.018>.

Nicolás Martínez, C., Rubio Bañón, A., & Fernández Laviada, A. (2019), *Social Entrepreneur: Same or Different from the Rest?* *Voluntas*, 30(3), 443-459.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-00053-9>.

Nielsen, B.B. (2005), *The role of knowledge embeddedness in the creation of synergies in strategic alliances*, *Journal of Business Research*, 58:1194-1204.

Nikolić, Nenad, Zhaklina Dharmo, Peter Schulte, Ivan Mihajlović, and Vasilika Kume. (2015), *An analysis of factors acting failure of SMEs*. Paper presented at 11th International May Conference on Strategic Management—IMKSM2015, Bor, Serbia, May 29–31; pp. 160–80.

Nobel, C. (2011). *Why companies fail and how their founders can bounce back*. Harvard Business School, 1-2.

Nohria, Nitin and Rober G. Eccles (1992), *Networks and Organisations, Structures, Forms and Action*, Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Northouse, P. G. (2018), *Leadership: Theory and practice (8th ed)*, Sage Publications.

O'Connor, E. (2004), *Storytelling to be real: Narrative, legitimacy building and venturing*. In D. Hjorth and C. Steyaert (Eds.), *Narrative and Discursive Approaches in Entrepreneurship*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 105–124.

O'Regan, N., & Ghobadian, A. (2004), The link between leadership, strategy, and performance in manufacturing SMEs, *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 15(2), 45–57. <https://libjournals.mtsu.edu/index.php/jsbs/article/view/32>

Oakley, Allen (1990), *Schumpeter's Theory of Capitalist Motion. A Critical Exposition and Reassessment*, Hants, England, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Obaji, N.O. and Olugu, M.U. (2014), *The role of government policy in entrepreneurship development*, *Science Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 2 No. 4, p. 109, doi: 10.11648/j.sjbm.20140204.12

Obstfeld, D. (2022), *The Power of Informal Networks in Entrepreneurial Success*, Routledge.

OECD (2004), *Promoting entrepreneurship and innovative SMEs in a global economy: towards a more responsible and inclusive Globalisation. Financing innovative SMEs in a global economy*, 2nd OECD Conference of Ministers Responsible for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Istanbul, Turkey, 3-5 June 2004, (June), pp. 1-47.

OECD/EU (2018), *Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in higher education in The Netherlands*, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/publications/supporting-entrepreneurshipand-innovation-in-higher-education-in-the-netherlands-9789264292048-en.htm>.

Ogbe, A.A., and Orodriyo, P. (2018), *Networking Business: The Hope For Future Entrepreneurs*, Department of Business & Management, College of Economics & Management Kampala International University, Kampala, Uganda.

Omri, Anis, and Maha Ayadi-Frikha. 2014. Constructing a mediational model of small business growth. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 10: 319–42.

Omri, Anis, Maha Ayadi-Frikha, and Mohamed Amine Bouraoui. 2015. An empirical investigation of factors affecting small business success. *Journal of Management Development* 34: 1073–93.

Ooi, Y.K., Selvarajah, C. and Meyer, D. (2011), *Inclination towards entrepreneurship among university students: an empirical study of Malaysian university students*, International Journal of Business and Social Science, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 206-220.

Österle, H., Fleisch, E. & Alt, R. (2001), *Business networking: Shaping collaboration between enterprises*, 2nd Edition. Berlin, Germany : Springer.

Othman, N. and Ab Wahid, H. (2014), *Social entrepreneurship among participants in the students in free enterprise program*, Education þ Training, Vol. 56 Nos 8/9, pp. 852-869, doi: 10.1108/ET-09-2013-0111.

Othman, N. and Tengku Muda, T.N.A.A. (2018), *Emotional intelligence towards entrepreneurial career choice behaviours*, Education þ Training, Vol. 60 No. 9, pp. 953-970, doi: 10.1108/ET-07-2017-0098.

Othman, N., Hashim, N. and Ab Wahid, H. (2012), *Readiness towards entrepreneurship education Students and Malaysian universities*, Education þ Training, Vol. 54 Nos 8/9, pp. 697-708, doi:10.1108/00400911211274837.

Ottesen, Geir G., Lene Foss, and Kjell Gronhaug (2004), Exploring the Accuracy of SME Managers' Network Perceptions, Management Decision, 38 (5/6), 593-607.

Oviatt BM and McDougall P (2005), *Defining international entrepreneurship and modeling the speed of internationalization*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 29(5): 537-554.

Ozili, P. K., & Arun, T. (2020), *Spillover of COVID-19*, SSRN Electronic Journal, March 2020, 27. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3562570>.

Paasche, Thor, Arve Pettersen, Oval Solem (1993), *Network Theory, A Critical Review*, Paper presented to "The Conference on the Development and Strategies of SME's in 1990's", Mikkeli, Finland.

Palacios Duarte, P. D., Saavedra García, M. L., & Cortés Castillo, M. del R. (2020), *Comparative study of male and female business performance in Mexico : Business Performance in Mexico*, Revista Finanzas y Política Económica, 12, 431-459. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14718/revfinanzpolitecon.v12.n2.2020.3375>

Pantano, E., Pizzi, G., Scarpi, D., & Dennis, C. (2020), *Competing during a pandemic? Retailers' ups and downs during the COVID-19 outbreak*, Journal of Business Research, 116, 209- 213. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.036>.

Papadopoulos, T., Baltas, K. N., & Balta, M. E. (2020), *The use of digital technologies by small and medium enterprises during COVID-19: Implications for theory and practice*, International Journal of Information Management, 55(June), 102192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102192>.

Parasuraman, B. (2007), *An examination of employee participation in the private sector: Malaysian case study*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Wollongong, Australia.

Parker, S. K., Morgeson, F. P., & Johns, G. (2017), *One hundred years of work design research: Looking back and looking forward*, Journal of Applied Psychology, 102(3), 403–420. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000106>

Perry, J. T. (2001), *A comparison of failed and non-failed small businesses: An examination of the impact of entrepreneurial network structure*, Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, 6(4), 289-307.

Patton, M. Q. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2015), *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.), SAGE Publications.

Penrose, E. (1959), *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm*, New York: Wiley.

Perera, V. (2016), *Five deadly sins of small business failure*, Retrieved November 4, 2021, from Malay Mail Web site: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/life/2016/01/28/five-deadly-sins-of-small-business-failure/1049649>

Peris-ortiz, M., Fuster-estruch, V., & Devece-carañana, C. (2014), *Entrepreneurship and Innovation in a Context of Crisis*, Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02384-7>

Perrone, L., & Wilson, J. (2023), *The impact of entrepreneurial networks on market expansion: A comparative study of SMEs in Asia and Europe*, Journal of Small Business Management, 61(2), 285-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2023.2183457>

Perry, S.C. (2001), *The relationship between written business plans and the failure of small businesses in the U.S.* *Journal of Small Business Management*. 39 (3), 201-208.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1540-627X.00019>

Personal Data Protection Act 2010, Law of Malaysia, [online] Available at: <http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/LOM/EN/Act%20709%2014%206%202016.pdf>, assessed on 20th February 2019.

Peteraf, M. A. (1993), *The cornerstones of competitive advantage: A resource-based view.*, *Strategic Management Journal*, 14(3), 179–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250140303>

Peters, T.J. and Waterman, R.H. (1982), *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*, Warner, New York, NY.

Peters, T. J., & Waterman, R. H. (1984), *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*, New York, NY: Warner Books.

Pfeffer, J and Salancik G R (1978), *The external control of organisations: A resource dependence perspective*, New York: Harper and Row.

Pfeffer, J. and G. R. Salancik (1974), *Organisational decision making as a political process*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 19, 135-51.

Phillips, R.J. (2010). *Arts Entrepreneurship and Economic Development: Can every city be "Austintatious"?* *Foundation and Trends in Entrepreneurship*, 6 (4), 239-313.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/03000000039>

Phondej, W., Kittisarn, A., & Neck, P. A. (2011). "The seven steps of case study development: A strategic qualitative research methodology in female leadership field". *Review of International Comparative Management*, 12(1), 123-134.

Pink, D. H. (2009), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Riverhead Books.

Pittaway, L., Robertson, M., Munir, K., Denyer, D. and Neely, A. (2004), *Networking and innovation: a systematic review of the evidence*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vols 5/6 Nos 3/4, pp. 137-168.

Pletnev, D., and V. Barkhatov. (2016), *Business success of small and medium sized enterprises in Russia and social responsibility of managers*, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 221: 185–93.

Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2021), *Creating Shared Value: Redefining Capitalism and the Role of the Corporation in Society*, Harvard Business Review Press.

Portuguez, M., & Zermeño, M. (2020), *Being entrepreneurial post- COVID-19 - resilience in times of crisis : a systematic review of the literature*, accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-07-2020-0246>.

Pratama, M. R., & Mardawan, O. (2022), *Studi Deskriptif Entrepreneurial Resilience pada Wirausahawan Mahasiswa di Masa Pandemi Covid-19*, Bandung Conference Series: Psychology Science, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcps.v2i1.713>

Prekert, F., and Hallen, L., (2006), *Conceptualizing, delineating and analysing business networks*, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol.40, No. ¾, pp.384-407.

Prithwiraj, N., Subramanian, N. & Ramakrishnan, R., (2010), *The impact of marketing quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Resources in gaining competitive advantage. *Human Resources Management*, 37.

Proaño Castro, M. F., Barzola López, L. H., & Orellana Intriago, F. R. (2020), *Economic consequences of Covid-19 in Latin America*, *E-Idea Journal of Business Sciences*.

Prohorovs, A., Bistrova, J. and Ten, D. (2019), *Startup success factors in the capital attraction stage: founders' perspective*, *Journal of East-West Business*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 26-51.

Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008), *Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(2), 229–252. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum015>

Putnam, R. D. (2000), *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, Simon & Schuster.

Putra, R. P., Yanuar, T., Syah, R., Pusaka, S., & Indradewa, R. (2019), *Human Resources Implementation Using the McKinsey 7S Method for Business Startup: Duck Nugget Frozen Food*, *Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic*, 03(03), 11–14.

Putra, Y. S., Istiyani, A., & Khasanah, uswatun. (2022), *Developing SMEs Resilience Through the Role of Digitalization and Human Resource Practices With Competitiveness As Mediating Variable: A Case Study in Kampung Singkong Salatiga*, ProBank: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Perbankan, 7(2), 136–143. <http://e-journal.stie-aub.ac.id/index.php/probank>

QAA (2018), *Enterprise and entrepreneurship education: guidance for UK higher education providers*, available at: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/enhancement-and-development/enterprise-and-entrprenurship-education-2018.pdf?sfvrsn515f1f981_8.

Rahman A.A.A., Nik M.N.M. and Ridzwan R. (2017), *Issues and Challenges among Young Entrepreneurs in Malaysia*, Journal of Business and Management, Vol. 19, Issue 3, Ver.II, pp.80-84.

Rahman, A., Zainal, R., & Tan, L. (2020), *Networking for innovation: Insights for Malaysian SMEs*, Asian Journal of Innovation Studies, 8(4), 215–230.

Rahman, A.A.A., Chong, P.L., Ong, T.S., Teh, B.H., Ong, T.C. (2023), *Business network and balanced scorecard: an analysis of small and medium enterprises in Malaysia*, Arab Gulf Journal of Scientific Research, June.

Rahman, A. H., & Hassan, M. F. (2023), *Networking strategies for long-term business growth: Examining the role of social capital and trust-based collaborations*, Journal of Business Venturing, 38(3), 104023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2023.104023>

Rahman, A. H., & Hassan, M. F. (2023), *Succession planning in entrepreneurial networks: Strategies for long-term sustainability and leadership development*, Journal of Small Business Management, 61(3), 412-436. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2023.2176543>

Ramdhani, R., Beta Margala, J., Hamdi, E., Indradewa, R., & Abadi, F. (2022), *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews Human Capital Strategy Using McKinsey's 7s Model in Co-Working Space Business*, International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, 3(9), 598. Retrieved from www.ijrpr.com

Ravanfar, M. M. (2015), *Analyzing organizational structure based on McKinsey's 7S model*, International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 5(5), 43-55.

Reis, D. A., Fleury, A. L., Bento, T., Fabbri, K., Ortega, L. M., & Bagnato, V. (2019), *Application of new agile approaches at University of São Paulo innovation agency's entrepreneurship and innovation course*, Gestao e Producao, 26(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-530X4122-19>.

Renko, M., Bullough, A., & Saeed, S. (2021), *How do resilience and self-efficacy relate to entrepreneurial intentions in countries with varying degrees of fragility? A six-country study*, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 39(2), 130–156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242620960456>

Rapert, M. I., Lynch, D., & Suter, T. (1996), *Enhancing functional and organizational performance via strategic consensus and commitment*, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 4(4), 193–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09652549600000004>

Rasiah R., Ng, Y.K. & Cheong K.C. (2024), *Mediating and moderating effects of social networks and business environment on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable competitive advantage among small and medium Malaysian firms in Cambodia*, *Asian Journal of Technology Innovation*, Vol.32, Issue 1, p. 182-203.

Rasiel, Ethan M. (1999), *The McKinsey Way: Using the Techniques of the World's Top Strategic Consultants to Help You and Your Business*, McGraw-Hill, USA.

Rao, S. (2014), *Nurturing entrepreneurial women*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 268-297, doi: 10.1108/JEEE-04-2014-0014.

Ratten, V. (2014), *Encouraging collaborative entrepreneurship in developing countries: the current challenges and a research agenda*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 298-308, doi: 10.1108/JEEE-05-2014-0015.

Ratten, V. (2020a), *Coronavirus (covid-19) and entrepreneurship : changing the work-life landscape work-life landscape*. 6331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1790167>

Ratten, V. (2020b), *Coronavirus (Covid-19) and entrepreneurship: cultural, lifestyle and social changes*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship In Emerging Economies*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1108 / JEEE-06-2020-0163>.

Ratten, V. (2021), *COVID-19 and entrepreneurship: Future research directions*, *Strategic Change*, 30(2), 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsc.2390>

Ratinho, T. and Henriques, E. (2010), *The role of science parks and business incubators in converging countries: evidence from Portugal*, *Technovation*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 278-290, doi: 10.1016/j.technovation.2009.09.002.

Ratinho, T., Harms, R. and Groen, A. (2010), *Technology business incubators as engines of growth: towards a distinction between technology incubators and non-technology incubators*, *Agse*, Vol. 2010 No. 2007, pp. 845-859, available at: <http://doc.utwente.nl/73695/>.

Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice. (2017-2020), [online] University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Available at: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/academic-office/misc-forms/REICoP-17-20-v3-Final.pdf>, assessed on 20th February 2019.

Reynolds, P. D. (2000), *National panel study of US business startups: Background and methodology*, *Advances in entrepreneurship, firm emergence and growth*, 4(1), 153-227.

Ridley, J. (2011), *The Freemasons: A History of the World's Most Powerful Secret Society*, Arcade Publishing.

Ritter, Thomas, and Hans Georg Germünden (1999), *Network competence and its impact on innovation success*, *Journal of Business Research*, 15, 387-94.

Ritter, Thomas (2000), *A Framework for Analysing Interconnectedness of Relationships*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29, 317-26.

Ritter, Thomas (2002), *Measuring Network Competence*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 117 (2/3), 119-38.

Ritter, Thomas (1999), *The Networking Company*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28, 467-79.

Ritter, Thomas and Hans Georg Germünden (2003), *Interorganisational relationships and networks: An overview*, *Journal of Business Research*, 56 (9), 691-97.

Ritter, Thomas, Ian F. Wilkinson, and Wesley J. Johnston (2004), *Managing in Complex Business Networks*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33, 175-83.

Rochford K (2010), *Those who stayed loyal: An empirical examination of New Zealand manufacturers surviving in a global market*, *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy* 4(4): 346–371.

Rocks, S., Gilmore, A. and Carson, D. (2005), Developing strategic marketing through the use of marketing networks, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 81-92.

Roethlisberger, F.J. and W.J. Dickson (1939), *Management and the worker*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Rogers, E. M. (2003), *Diffusion of innovations (5th ed.)*, Free Press.

Rokom (2022), *PPKM di Indonesia Resmi Dicabut*. Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia.

<https://sehatnegeriku.kemkes.go.id/baca/rilis-media/20221230/0042128/ppkm-di-indonesia-resmi-dicabut/>

Rostamkaleai, A. (2017), *Discouraged borrowers aftermath of financial crisis: a UK study*, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 24(2), 394-410. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2016-0140>

Rothwell, W. J. (2010), *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within*, AMACOM.

Roundy, P.T., Brockman, B.K. and Bradshaw, M. (2017), *The resilience of entrepreneurial ecosystems*, *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, Vol. 8, pp. 99-104, doi: 10.1016/j.jbvi.2017.08.002.

Rowe, A., Dong, L., Landon, J. and Rezkalla, E. (2019), *Scaling start-ups: challenges in Canada's innovation ecosystem*, ISPIIM Conference Proceedings, The International Society for Professional Innovation Management (ISPIIM), pp. 1-17, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Emily_Rezkalla/publication/343450223_Scaling_Start-ups_Challenges_in_Canada's_Innovation_Ecosystem/links/5f2ad7a5a6fdcccc43ac5b2e/Scaling-Start-ups-Challenges-in-Canadas-Innovation-Ecosystem.pdf.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995), *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, London: Sage Publications.

Rudmann, C. (2008), *Entrepreneurial skills and their role in enhancing the relative independence of farmers*. Results and recommendations from the Research Project Developing Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers. *Research Institute of Organic Agriculture*. Frick, Switzerland. Retrieved from <http://www.esofarmers.org/espublications.html>

Salancik, G.R. (1995), *Wanted a good network theory of organisation*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40, 345-49.

Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S. I., Kraiger, K., & Smith-Jentsch, K. A. (2012), *The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice*, Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13(2), 74–101.

Sánchez, J. C. (2011), *Entrepreneurship as a legitimate field of knowledge*. *Psicothema*, 23(3), 427–432.

Sangurah R. M. R. & Tubeyi R. (2017), *Role Of Women Entrepreneurs' Traits On New Venture Start-Ups In Western Kenya*, International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management ISSN 2520-9108 (Paper) ISSN 2518-2838 (Online) Vol.2, Issue 3 No.4, pp 40 - 47, 2017.

Sangurah R. M. R., Omboto P. I & Tubeyi R. (2017), *Resource Support and Women-owned MSEs' Growth in Western Kenya*, The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies (ISSN 2321 - 9203) www.theijhss.com. 2017.

Sangurah R. M. R. (2019), *Growing Women-Owned MSEs in Kenya*, International Journal of Innovative Research & Development Doi No.: 10.24940/Ijird/2019/V8/I6/Jun19059

Sangurah R.M.R. (2020), *Are Entrepreneurship Theories From Developed Countries Applicable in Developing Countries?*, International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS), Volume IV, Issue VIII, August 2020.

Santoro, G., Bertoldi, B., Giachino, C., & Candelo, E. (2020), Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial resilience and success: The moderating role of stakeholders' engagement, *Journal of Business Research*, 119, 142–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.052>

Sarasvathy SD (2001), *Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency*, *Academy of Management Review* 26(2): 243–263.

Sarasvathy SD, Kumar K, York JG, et al. (2014), *An effectual approach to international entrepreneurship: Overlaps, challenges, and provocative possibilities*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 38(1): 71–93.

Sarwar, A., Maqsood, U. and Mujtaba, B.G. (2021), *Impact of job insecurity due to COVID-19 on the psychological wellbeing and resiliency of food delivery personnel*, *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 24-44, doi: 10.5296/ijhrs.v11i1.18075, available at: <http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ijhrs/article/view/18075>.

Sagita A., Mohd Yusof M.S., Budiharjo R., Nsereko I and Suhimi S. (2024), *Entrepreneurial networking as a mediator between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance: Insights from small business owners in Malaysia*, Asian Economic and Financial Review, Vol.15, No.1, 76-97, DOI: 10.55493/5002.v15i1.5284

Satar, M.; Alharthi, S.; Asad, M.; Alenazy, A.; Asif, M.U. (2024), *The Moderating Role of Entrepreneurial Networking between Entrepreneurial Alertness and the Success of Entrepreneurial Firms*. Sustainability 2024, 16, 4535. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16114535>

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019), *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.), Pearson.

Saunders, M. N. K., & Townsend, K. (2022), *How Many Interviews Are Enough? Data Saturation and Variability in Qualitative Research*, Journal of Organizational Research Methods, 25(2), 135-152.

Scott, W.R. (2014), *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests and Identities*, 4th ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Seah, M., & Hsieh, M. H. (2015), *Impact of leader adaptability on organizational change and adaptation: The case of Savecom Communication*, Journal of Asia Business Studies, 9(3), 213. doi:10.1108/JABS-05-2012-0023

Seah, L., & Hsieh, P. (2022), *Leadership and Adaptability in Entrepreneurial Networking*, Journal of Business Strategy, 13(4), 72-91.

Selangor Journal. (2024), *SME Corp to boost MSMEs with RM134.6 mln allocation for 2024 initiatives*, Retrieved from <https://selangorjournal.my/>

Sendawula, K., Kisubi, M.K., Najjinda, S., Nantale, H. and Kabbera, S. (2023), *The efficacy of entrepreneurial networking and innovation in fostering the performance of small businesses in Uganda*, Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 2023,12:88 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00358-0>

Sergi, B. S., Popkova, E. G., Bogoviz, A. V., & Ragulina, J. V. (2019), *Chapter 1 Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth: The Experience of Developed and Developing Countries*, In Entrepreneurship and Development in the 21st Century. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78973-233-720191002>.

Seyoum, B., Chinta, R. and Mujtaba, B.G. (2021), *Social support as a driver of social entrepreneurial intentions: the moderating roles of entrepreneurial education and*

proximity to the SBA, Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, in-press, available at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JSBED-08-2020-0306/full/html>.

Shaker A, Z. (2020), *International entrepreneurship in the post- Covid world*, Accessed via. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2020.101143>.

Shekar M., Hassan M. and Mubarak M.A., (2021), *Revisiting the Challenges Affecting SMEs Through Behavioral Approach*, International Journal of Academic in Business and Social Sciences, DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i9/10753

Shane, S. (2011), *The Great Recession's Effect on Entrepreneurship*, Economic Commentary (Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ec-201104>. <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ec-201104>

Shaw, E. (2013), *Entrepreneurial capital and networks*, in Sethna, Z., Jones, R. and Harrigan, P. (Eds), *Entrepreneurial Marketing Global Perspectives*, Emerald Group Publishing, Burley, pp. 147-164

Shepherd, D. A., Saade, F. P., & Wincent, J. (2020), How to circumvent adversity? Refugee-entrepreneurs' resilience in the face of substantial and persistent adversity, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 35(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2019.06.001>

Sherf, E.N., Parke, M.R., Isaakyan, S. and February (2021), *Distinguishing voice and silence at work: unique relationships with perceived impact, psychological safety, and burnout*, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 64 No. 1, pp. 114-148, doi: 10.5465/amj.2018.1428.

Sheth, Jagdish N. (1973), *A Model of Industrial Buyer Behaviour*, *Journal of Marketing*, 37 (4), 50-56.

Sheth, Jagdish N., David M. Gardner, and Dennis E. Garrett (1988), *Marketing Theory, Evolution and Evaluation*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Shin, D.P., Bae, Y.K. and Son, S.H. (2018), *The present and implications of technology-based business activation support policy*, *KISTEP issue weekly*, KISTEP, Vol. 266 No. 08, pp. 56-97.

Shilpa, K. M., & Jaya, Y. (2018), *Leadership Development in Entrepreneurial Networks: A Strategic Perspective*, *Journal of Business Strategy*, 29(2), 74-88.

Silverman, D. (2020), *Qualitative research* (5th ed.), SAGE Publications.

Silversides, G. (2001), *Networking and Identity: the role of networking in the public image of professional service firms*, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 174-184.

Sikomwe, S., Kandufa, P., Giga, D. & Mudzurandende, F. (2014), *Analyzing business failure in relation to the life cycle of the business and the economic cycle: A study of entrepreneurial ventures in Hwange (Zimbabwe)*. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6 (7), 80-91.

Singer, B. (2004), *The ABC's of building a business team that wins: The invisible code of honor that takes ordinary people and turns them into a championship team*, New York: Warner Business Books.

Singh, Satvir (1989), *Personality Characteristics, Work Values, and Life Styles of Fast- and Slow-Progressing Small-Scale Industrial Entrepreneurs*, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 129, No. Dec.

Singh, A. (2013), *A study of role of McKinsey's 7S framework in achieving organizational excellence*, *Organization Development Journal*, 31(3), 39-50. Retrieved from <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-3153977971.html>

Singh, A. S. (2014), *Conducting case study research in non-profit organizations*, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 17(1), 77-84. doi:10.1108/QMR-04-2013-0024

Singh, J. N., & Chen, G. C. (2017), *State-owned enterprises and the political economy of state-state relations in developing world*, *Third World Quarterly* 39(6), 1077-1097. doi:10.1080/01436597.2017.1333888

Singh, S. (2021), *Motivation and Employee Engagement in Business Networks: A McKinsey 7S Perspective*. *Journal of Organizational Studies*, 48(2), 34-56.

Singh, S. K. (2022), *Developing business networking, negotiation, and communication skills in SMEs*, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 29(4), 567-583. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2021-0367>

Singh, R., & Patel, D. (2023), *Mentorship and networking: Leveraging professional connections for entrepreneurial skill development*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 47(2), 267-289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587221103492>

Singh S. and Basri S, (2024), *Antecedents of entrepreneurial networking behavior and its impact on business performance - a systematic literature review*, *F1000Res*. 2024 Jul 12;13:794. doi: 10.12688/f1000research.150032.1. PMID: 39206273; PMCID: PMC11350331.

- Sit, V. F.-S. and Wong, S.-L. (1989), *Small and Medium Industries in an Export-Oriented Economy: The Case of Hong Kong*, Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong.
- Smallbone, D., Deakins, D., Battisti, M., & Kitching, J. (2012), *Small business responses to a major economic downturn: Empirical perspectives from New Zealand and the United Kingdom*, *International Small Business Journal*, 30(7), 754-777. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242612448077>.
- Smallbone, D., Welter, F. and Ateljevic, J. (2014), Entrepreneurship in emerging market economies: contemporary issues and perspectives, *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 113-116.
- SME Corporation Malaysia (2022), *MSME Insights 2022/23*, Retrieved from <https://www.smecorp.gov.my>, Accessed on 1st November 2024.
- SME Corp Malaysia (2022), *SME Masterplan 2030: Strengthening Business Networks for a Competitive Economy*, SME Corp Malaysia.
- Smith, N. R. (1967), *The Entrepreneur and His Firm: The Relationship Between Type of Man and Type of Company*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Smith, N. R. and Miner, J. B. (1983), Type of entrepreneur, type of firm, and managerial motivation: Implications for organizational life cycle theory, *Strategic Management Journal*, 4, (4), 325–340.
- Smith, J., Rodriguez, L., & Thomas, C. (2023), *High-performance teams in entrepreneurial settings: How teamwork drives innovation and growth in SMEs*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 38(2), 103921. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2023.103921>
- Snehota, Ivan (2003), *Market as Network; So What?*, in Proceedings in the 19th Annual Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Conference. Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Snehota, Ivan (2011), *New Business Formation in Business Networks*, *The IMP Journal*, 5 (1), 1-9.
- Snehota, I., & Gadde, L. E. (2021), *Managing Business Networks: The Role of Interactive Relationships*, *Journal of Business Market Management*, 15(2), 230-250
- Sofyan, A. T. (2021), *Resiliensi dan inovasi umkm sebagai penggerak pemulihan ekonomi*, *Visionary*, 9(2), 57–65. <https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/visionary>

Sornoza Parrales, D., Parrales Poveda, M. L., Sornoza Parrales, G., Cañarte Rodríguez, T., Castillo Merino, A., Guaranda Sornoza, V., & Delgado Lucas, H. (2018), *Fundamentos de emprendimiento*, In *Fundamentos de emprendimiento*. <https://doi.org/10.17993/ecoorgycso.2018.39>

Sorenson, O., Rivkin, J. W., & Fleming, L. (2008), *The Benefits of Business Networking for SMEs: A Structural Perspective*. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(3), 324-335.

Sousa, M. (2018), *Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Higher Education Courses for Teams Leaders, Administrative Sciences*, 8(2), 18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8020018>

Spigel, B. (2017), *The relational organization of entrepreneurial ecosystems*, *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 49-72, doi: 10.1111/etap.12167.

Srivastava, V. N. (2014), Excellence through innovations in public enterprises, *Productivity*, 55(2), 149- 161. Retrieved from <https://web.a.ebscohost.com>

Stake, R. E. (1995), *The art of case study research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stam, W., & Elfring, T. (2008), *Entrepreneurial orientation and new venture performance: The moderating role of intra- and extra industry social capital*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(1), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2008.30744031>

Stern, Louis W. and T. Reve (1980), *Distribution channels as political economies: a framework for comparative analysis*, *Journal of Marketing*, 44.

Stern, Louis W. (1996), *Relationships, Networks and the Three C's*, in *Networks in Marketing*, Dawn Iacobucci, ed.

Stokes, D. and Wilson, N. (2006), *Small business management and entrepreneurship*, available at: <https://otru.pw/mb.pdf>.

Strauss, A. (1987), *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sudiby, N. A., Najib, M., Andrianto, M. S., Alimovich, E., Marhadi, & Boros, A. (2023), *The Rise of ASEAN SMEs: How to Successfully Enter the Global Market*, Preprints.

Sull, D., Turconi, S., & Sull, C. (2020), *When it comes to culture, does your company walk the talk?* *Harvard Business Review*.

Sundah, P. M., Adeline, C., & Purba, H. (2021), *Digitalisasi UMKM sebagai Langkah Mewujudkan Pemulihan dan Resiliensi*, *Pelaku Usaha di Masa Pandemi* (Vol. 4).

- Surin, E. F., & Wahab, I. A. (2013), *The effect of social network on business performance in Malaysian SMEs*, Retrieved from ResearchGate.
- Suryawati, D., Budi Helpiatuti, S., & Firdaus, A. (2023), Model Pendekatan Adaptif sebagai Upaya Membangkitkan Resiliensi UMKM, *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 12(1), 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jish.v12i1.51741>.
- Suwanda, & Nugroho, B. Y. (2022), *Literature reviews: McKinsey 7S Model to Support Organizational Performance*, *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 38, 1–9.
- Swan, Jackie, Sue Newell, Harry Scarborough, and Donald Hislop (1999), *Knowledge Management and Innovation: Networks and Networking*, *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 3 (4), 262-75.
- Sweeney, J.C., Soutar, G.N. and McColl-Kennedy, J.R. (2011), *The marketing practices performance relationship in professional service firms*, *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 292-316.
- Swierczek, F.W. and Ha, T.T. (2003), *Entrepreneurial orientation, uncertainty avoidance and firm performance: an analysis of Thai and Vietnamese SMEs*, *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 46-58, doi: 10.5367/000000003101299393.
- Tan, W. (2002), *Practical Research Methods*, Singapore: Prentice Hall Asia, pp.61.
- Tan, S., & Ismail, H. (2022), *Cross-cultural networking and entrepreneurial success: The role of institutional frameworks in Malaysia and Singapore*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15(3), 240-263. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-12-2021-0467>
- Tan, S., & Ismail, H. (2022), *The influence of communication competence on entrepreneurial success: The moderating role of adaptability*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 14(1), 150-169. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-11-2021-0453>
- Teh, D., & Corbitt, B. (2015), *Building sustainability strategy in business*, *Journal of Business Strategy*, 36(6), 39-46. doi:10.1108/JBS-08-2014-0099
- Tembo, Alfred (2021), *Strategies to Sustain Business Operations During Continuous Environmental Change*, DBA dissertation at Walden University, Walden Dissertation and Doctoral Studies.
- Tetan, D. and Allen, S. (2005), *Virtual Handshake: Opening Doors and Closing Deals Online*, Amacom, New York, NY.
- The Star. (2019), *SME Corp targets the digitalisation of all SMEs by 2024*, Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/>, assessed on 10th September 2023.

Thom, Marco. (2016), *Crucial Skills for the Entrepreneurial Success of Fine Artists*, Artivate, Winter 2016, Vol. 5 No. 1 (Winter 2016), pp.3-24, University of Arkansas Press.

Thom, M. (2016), *The impact of networking on entrepreneurial success*, Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, 10(2), 88-102.

Thompson, A.A., Gamble, J.E. & Strickland, A.J. (2006), *Strategy: Core concepts, analytical tools and readings*, 2nd Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Thompson, J. & Martin, F. (2005), *Strategic management: awareness and change*, 5th Edition. London: Thompson Learning.

Thornhill, S. & Amit, R. (2003), *Learning about failure: Bankruptcy, firm age, and the resource-based view*. *Organization Science*, 14(5), 497-509. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/orsc.14.5.497.16761>

Tichy, N. and Fombrun, C. (1979), *Network analysis in organizational settings*, Human Relations, Vol. 32 No. 11, pp. 923-965.

Timmons, JA & Spinelli, S. (2009), *New Venture Creation Entrepreneurship for the 21st Century*, 8th edn. McGraw-Hill Irwin, Boston.

Tonge, J. (2010), *The influence of position and gender on personal networks in a UK professional service*, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 390-399.

Tong, A. and Gong, R. (2020), *The impact of Covid-19 on SME digitalization in Malaysia*, LSE, October 20th 2020, UK.

Toresdahl, B. G., & Asif, I. M. (2020), *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Considerations for the Competitive Athlete*, Sports Health, 12(3), 221-224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1941738120918876>

Turnbull, P.W. and M.T. Cunningham (1981), *International Marketing and Purchasing*, London: Macmillan Press.

Turnbull, P.W. and J.P. Valla (1986), *Strategies for international industrial marketing*, London: Croom Helm.

Umbaris, Y. M. Y., Gisip, I. A., & Ambad, N. A. (2020), *Strategic Orientation and Performance of Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Sabah, Malaysia*, In Journal of Social Transformation and Regional Development (Vol. 2, Issue 1). Penerbit UTHM. <https://doi.org/10.30880/jstard.2020.02.02>.

UNDP (2024), *Building MSME Resilience in Southeast Asia: With a Country Focus on Thailand and Malaysia*, UNDP Insurance and Risk Finance Facility in partnership with GENERALI.

Üstüner, Tuba and David Gordes (2006), *Better Sales Networks*, Harvard Business Review, 84 (7-8), 102-12.

Üstüner, Tuba and Dawn Iacobucci (2012), *Does Interorganisational Network Embeddedness Improve salespeople's Effectiveness? A Task Contingency Perspective*, Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 2, 187-205.

Vahlne JE and Johanson J (2017), *From internationalization to evolution: The Uppsala model at 40 years*, Journal of International Business Studies 48(9): 1087–1102.

Valerie Menelec, Brian Jones, (2015), *Networks and marketing in small professional service businesses*, Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 17 Issue: 2, pp.193-211, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRME-03-2015-0023>

Van de Ven, A H (1976), *On the nature, formation, and maintenance of relations among organisations*, Academy of Management Review, 1 (4), 24-36.

Vasilchenko, E. and S. Morrish (2011), *The role of entrepreneurial networks in the exploration and exploitation of internationalization opportunities by information and communication technology firms*, Journal of International Marketing, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 88-105.

Verhees, F.J. and Meulenbergh, M.T. (2004), *Market orientation, innovativeness, product innovation, and performance in small firms*, Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 42 No. 2, pp. 134-154, available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2004.00102.x>.

Vesala, K.M. & Pyysiäinen, J. (2008), *Understanding entrepreneurial skills in the farm context*. Final report on the main study of the EU-funded project Developing Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers. Retrieved from <http://www.esofarmers.org/espublications.html>

Veskaisri, K., Chan, P., & Pollard, D. (2007), *Relationship between strategic planning and SME success: empirical evidence from Thailand*, International DSI / Asia and Pacific DSI. Retrieved November 15, 2021 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229046574_Relationship_

Virginia Fernández-Pérez, Patricia Esther Alonso-Galicia, María del Mar Fuentes-Fuentes, Lazaro Rodriguez-Ariza, (2014), *Business social networks and academics' entrepreneurial intentions*, Industrial Management & Data Systems, Vol. 114 Issue: 2, pp.292-320.

Voda, A., & Florea, N. (2019), *Impact of Personality Traits and Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Intentions of Business and Engineering Students*, Galindo-martín, M. Á., & Méndez-picazo, M. T. (2016). *Journal of*

Innovation Conceptual article and entrepreneurship. 1, 62-68.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.01.006>, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11041192>

Wales WJ (2016), *Entrepreneurial orientation: A review and synthesis of promising research directions*, *International Small Business Journal* 34(1): 3–15.

Wales WJ, Gupta VK and Mousa FT (2013), *Empirical research on entrepreneurial orientation: An assessment and suggestions for future research*, *International Small Business Journal* 31(4): 357–383.

Wales WJ, Wiklund J and McKelvie A (2015), *What about new entry? Examining the theorized role of new entry in the entrepreneurial orientation–performance relationship*, *International Small Business Journal* 33(4): 351–373.

Wang, C., Walker, E. A., & Redmond, J. (2011), *Explaining the lack of strategic planning in SMEs: the importance of owner motivation*, *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 12 (1), 1-16.

Wang, Y., Chen, Y., & Fang, Y. (2022), *How social networks influence the growth of entrepreneurial enterprises: A structural perspective*, *SAGE Open*, 12(3), 21582440221108178.

Warr, D. (2004), *Stories in the flesh and voices in the head: Reflections on the context and impact of research with disadvantaged populations*, *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(4), 578-587.

Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994), *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*, Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815478>

Waterman, R.H., Peters, T.J. and Phillips, J.R. (1980), *Structure is not organization*, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 14-26.

Watson, C. (1983), *Leadership, management and the seven keys*, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 8-13.

Watson, J. (2007), *Modeling the relationship between networking and firm performance*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 852-974.

Watson, Kathryn, Sandra Hogarth-Scott, and Nicholas Wilson. (1998), *Small business start-ups: Success factors and support implications*, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research 4: 217–38.

Welch, Catherine and Ian Wilkinson (2002), *Idea Logics and Network Theory in Business Marketing*, Journal of Business to Business Marketing, 9 (3), 27-48.

Welch, C., & Wilkinson, I. (2002), *Conceptualizing Networks: The ARA Model and Its Strategic Implications*, Journal of Business Research, 55(1), 28-35.

Wellman, B. and S.D. Berkowitz (1988), *Social structures: a network approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Welsh, D. H., Memili, E., Rosplock, K., Roure, J., & Segurado, J. L. (2014), *Perceptions of entrepreneurship across generations in family offices: A stewardship theory perspective*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 38(6), 1221-1239.

Wernerfeldt, B. (1984), *The resource-based view of the firm*, Strategic Management Journal, 5, 171–180.

Welter, F. (2011), *Contextualizing entrepreneurship: conceptual challenges and ways forward*, Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 165-184.

Welter, F. and Smallbone, D. (2011), *Institutional perspectives on entrepreneurial behavior in challenging environments*, Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 107-125.

Widodo, S., Ekaputrib, S., Wiardic, A.H. & Suryosukmonod, G., (2022), *Impact of Movement Control Order to Business Sustainability During Covid-19 Pandemic: a Case of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises*, Asia-Pacific Management and Business Application 11 (1) 75-94.

Williams, T. (2005), *Cooperation by design: structure and cooperation in interorganizational networks*, Journal of Business Research, Vol. 58 No. 2, pp. 223-231.

Williams, K., & Thomas, R. (2023), *Dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial adaptation: How networking facilitates market resilience*, International Journal of Business Research, 60(4), 402-429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884231108957>

Williams, K., & Johnson, R. (2023), *Digital networking in the era of entrepreneurship: How virtual business interactions shape networking outcomes*, International Journal of Business Communication, 60(3), 401-423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884231106789>

Wiklund, J., Davidsson, P., Audretsch, D. B., & Karlsson, C. (2011), *The future of entrepreneurship research*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 35(1), 1-9.

Wiklund J and Shepherd D (2011), *Where to from here? EO-as-experimentation, failure, and distribution of outcomes*, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice 35(5): 925–946.

Wilkins, G. (1997), *How does networking contribute towards the success of small firms in the advertising industry: proceeding of the small business & enterprise development conference*, European Research Press, Leeds, Sheffield UK (March), pp. 19-20.

Wilkinson, Ian (2001), *A history of Network and Channels thinking in Marketing in the 20th Century*, Australian Marketing Journal, 9 (2), 25-52.

Wilkinson, Ian F., L G Mattsson, and Geoff Easton (2000), *International Competitiveness and Trade Promotion Policy from a Network Perspective*, Journal of World Business, 35 (3), 275-90.

Wilkinson, Ian F. and Louise C. Young (2005), *Social Networks of Researchers in B2B Marketing: A Case Study of the IMP Group 1984-1999*, Journal of Business to Business Marketing, 12 (1), 3-32.

Wilkinson, Ian and Louise Young (2002), *On Cooperating Firms, Relations and Networks*, Journal of Business Research, 55, 123-32.

Waller, D (1999), *Network Exchange Theory*, New York: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Wilson, David T. (1995), *An Integrated Model of Buyer Seller Relationships*, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23, 336-46.

Wilson, Elizabeth J. and Charles C. Nielson (2000), *Cooperation and Continuity in Strategic Business Relationships*, Journal of Business to Business Marketing, 8, 1-24.

Wilson, Jerry (1991), *Word of Mouth Marketing (1st ed.)*, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Wilson, N.C. and Stokes, D. (2004), *Laments and serenades: relationship marketing and legitimation strategies for the cultural entrepreneur*, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 218-27.

Winarsih, M. I. (2021), *Impact of Covid-19 on Digital Transformation and Sustainability in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Conceptual Framework*. *Complex, Intelligent and Software Intensive Systems*, CISIS 2020. *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, 1194(Springer, Cham).

Witt, P. (2004), *Entrepreneurs networks and the success of start-ups*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, pp. 391-412.

World Bank. (2021), *Malaysia Economic Monitor: SME Development*, Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/malaysia>, assessed on 10th October 2023.

World Bank. (2023), *Malaysia's Experience with the SME Masterplan*, Retrieved from [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org).

Tan J (2001), *Innovation and risk-taking in a transitional economy: A comparative study of Chinese managers and entrepreneurs*, *J. Bus. Ventur.*, 16: 359-376.

Tan, S., & Ismail, H. (2022), *Cross-cultural networking and entrepreneurial success: The role of institutional frameworks in Malaysia and Singapore*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15(3), 240-263. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-12-2021-0467>

Tenney M., (2024), *Employee Motivation and Its Impact on Productivity*, PeopleThriver, accessed from <https://peoplethriver.com/employee-motivation-and-its-impact-on-productivity/> on 15th January 2025.

The Asia Foundation (2024), *Striving Digitally: Understanding the Challenges of Malaysian Women Entrepreneurs*, KANITA University Sains Malaysia.

The Strategy institute (2024), *The McKinsey 7-S Model for Organizational Alignment and Success*, TSI, retrieved from: <https://www.thestrategyinstitute.org/insights/the-mckinsey-7-s-model-for-organizational-alignment-and-success?>

The Wall Street Journal. (2023, January 11), *Singapore, Malaysia kindle a border-town investment boom*, retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/economy/global/singapore-malaysia-kindle-a-border-town-investment-boom-db60a54d>

Triana Ortiz, K. N., & Dias Montes, N. J. (2020), *Entrepreneurship education from an agile approach*, Journal Documentos de Trabajo ECBTI, 1. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22490/ECBTI.4374>

Uzzi, B., & Dunlap, S. (2022), *The Social Structure of Business: Networks, Influence, and Organizational Performance*, Harvard Business Press.

Venturini, T. (2022), *From digital traces to computational social science: How actor-network theory can help digital methods*, *Big Data & Society*, 9(1), 20539517221080679.

Venturini, T. (2022), *From Media Technologies to Networked Institutions: The Role of Actor-Network Theory in Understanding Digital Organizations*, Oxford University Press.

Xu, J., & Chen, W. (2023), *The role of teamwork in organizational effectiveness: Implications for entrepreneurial growth and employee satisfaction*, *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 39(4), 278-297. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v39i4.12345>

Yazan, Bedrettin (2015), *Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam and Stake*, *The Qualitative Report 2015 Volume 20, Number 2, Teaching and Learning Article 1*, 134-152.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (1998), *Transnational Corporations and Business Networks: Hong Kong Firms in the ASEAN Region*, London: Routledge.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (2000a), *The dynamics of Asian business systems in a globalizing era*, *Review of International Political Economy*, 7, (3), 399–433.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (2000b), *Limits to the growth of family-owned business? The case of Chinese transnational corporations from Hong Kong*. *Family Business Review*, 13, (1), 55–70.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (2000c), *The dynamics of the globalization of business firms*. In H. W.-C. Yeung and K. Olds (Eds.), *Globalization of Chinese Business Firms*, London: Macmillan, 75–104.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (2002), *Entrepreneurship and the Internationalisation of Asian Firms: An Institutional Perspective*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Yeung, H. W.-C. (2004), *Chinese Capitalism in a Global Era: Towards a Hybrid Capitalism*, London: Routledge Curzon.

Yeung, H. W.-C. and Olds K. (2000), *Globalizing Chinese business firms: Where are they coming from, where are they heading?* In H. W.-C. Yeung and K. Olds (Eds.), *Globalization of Chinese Business Firms*, London: Macmillan, 1–28.

Yin, R. K. (2003), *Applications of Case Study Research (2nd ed.)*, United State: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2009), *Case Study Research Design and Methods (4th ed.)*, United States: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2011), *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, New York: The Guilford Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018), *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, SAGE Publications.

Yu, T. F.-L. (1998), *Adaptive entrepreneurship and the economic development of Hong Kong* World Development, 26(5), 897–911.106

Yusoff, M.N.H., Zainol, A.A. and Ibrahim, M.D. (2015), *Entrepreneurship education in Malaysia's public institutions of higher learning—a review of the current practices*, International Education Studies, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 17-28, doi: 10.5539/ies.v8n1p17.

Zahra, S.A. (2007), *Contextualizing theory building in entrepreneurship research*, Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 443-452.

Zahra, S.A. and Wright, M. (2011), *Entrepreneurship's next act*, The Academy of Management Perspectives, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 67-83.

Zahra, S.A., Korri, J.S. and Yu, J. (2005), *Cognition and international entrepreneurship: implications for research on international opportunity recognition and exploitation*, International Business Review, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 129-146.

Zahra, S.A., Wright, M. and Abdelgawad, S.G. (2014), *Contextualization and the advancement of entrepreneurship research*, International Small Business Journal, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 479-500.

Zaidi, R.A., Khan, M.M. and Khan R.A. (2021), *Do entrepreneurship ecosystem and managerial skills contribute to startup development?*, South Asian Journal of Business Studies, DOI:10.1108/SAJBS-07-2020-0233.

Zainuddin, M.N. and Mohd Rejab, M.R. (2010), *Assessing 'ME generation's' entrepreneurship degree programmes in Malaysia*, Education + Training, Vol. 52 Nos 6/7, pp. 508-527, doi: 10.1108/00400911011068469

Zainuddin, Mohammad Tahir (2021), *Empowering the Survival of SME Business in Challenges Against Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis towards Thriving the Performance*, The Malaysian Journal of Ismaic Sciences, Vol.33 S4.

Zainuddin, M. (2021), *The Impact of Social Networks on SME Performance in Malaysia*, Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship, 25(3), 50-67.

Zhang, D., Hu, M., & Ji, Q. (2020), *Financial markets under the global pandemic of COVID-19*, Finance Research Letters, 36(April), 101528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2020.101528>.

Zhang, J., Jin, Z., & Du, X. (2021), *Understanding the impact of social capital on entrepreneurship performance: A social network perspective*, Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 687205.

Zhao, X., Li, Y., & Wang, F. (2023), *The strategic role of networking in skill transfer and career development*, Human Resource Development Quarterly, 34(2), 198-217. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21783>

Zhou, L. (2007), *The effects of entrepreneurial proclivity and foreign market knowledge on early internationalization*, Journal of World Business, 42(3), 281-293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2007.04.009>

Zikmund, W. G. (2003). *Business Research Methods (7th ed.)*. Ohio: Thomson Learning.

WEB REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/enduring-ideas-the-7-s-framework>, assessed on 20th February 2019.
2. <https://strategicmanagementinsight.com/tools/mckinsey-7s-model-framework.html>, assessed on 20th February 2019.
3. Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Model (Online Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danisenberg/2011/05/25/introducing-the-entrepreneurship-ecosystem-four-defining-characteristics/#19f54d9e5fe8>, Assessed on 20th February 2020
4. Online literature, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universiti_Malaysia_Kelantan, Assessed on 1st September 2022
5. Online Information, <https://www.dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/small-and-medium-enterprises-smes-performance-2020>, Assessed on 20th September 2022
6. Online Information, <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/10300/> , Assessed on 28th April 2024
7. Online Information, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance>, Assessed on 11th May 2024.
8. Online Information, <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-most-influential-freemasons-2014-3>, Assessed on 1st June 2024.
9. Online Information: <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/10300/>, accessed on 3rd March 2024.
10. <https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/meditation17.php>, accessed on 1st February 2024.

APPENDICES

1. Table of Malaysian Government Agencies Supporting Entrepreneurship

Government agency	Website
MEDaC	http://www.medac.gov.my/
National Entrepreneurship Policy	http://www.medac.gov.my/admin/files/med/image/portal/Dasar%20Keusahawanan%20Nasional%20(DKN)%202030.pdf
SME Corporation Malaysia	http://www.smecorp.gov.my/index.php/en/
National Institute of Entrepreneurship	https://www.insken.gov.my/home/
MaGIC	https://mymagic.my/usc/
The People's Trust Council (MARA)	https://www.mara.gov.my
Malaysia Education Development Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education)	http://mohe.gov.my/en/pppm-pt
Flexible education	http://jpt.moe.gov.my/portal/pelajar/program-2u2i
MQF	https://www.mqa.gov.my/pv4/document/mqf/2019/Oct/updated%20MQF%20Ed%202%2024102019.pdf
Ministry of Higher Education list of public universities	http://jpt.moe.gov.my/portal/index.php/en/ipt/ipta/29-directory-of-public-university
Ministry of Higher Education list of private universities and university colleges	http://jpt.moe.gov.my/portal/index.php/en/ipt/ipts/45-list-of-ipts-registration-and-statistic

APPENDIX B: CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

Informed Consent

ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

You are invited to be in a research study of "ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)". You were selected as a valuable respondent because of your involvement to, and/or knowledge of, entrepreneurial activities in Malaysia. I ask that you read this form before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by **Weng Keat, Kong (Kenji)**, a Doctorate in Business Administration student at University of Wales, Trinity Saint David in partnership with London School of Commerce/Westminster International College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

RESEARCH TITLE:

ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND
MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL AND IMPLEMENTATION

STUDENT'S NAME:

WENG KEAT KONG

Email: kenjikong@telford.com.my

SUPERVISOR:

ASSOCIATE PROF. DR. FAKHRUL ANWAR ZAINOL

Email:

Research Title: ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

Consent Form

- Ivoluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves personal information, experience, data and thought about business networking and social entrepreneurial activities.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being video and audio recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's dissertation, viva presentation, conference presentation, published papers and all academic relevant studies.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this

with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio and video recordings will be retained in data storage in hard drive, cloud storage, paper and all its related documents will be stored in the safe keeping with the researcher and all the information will only be shared with the researcher's supervisor and the research committee from the university/college until after the researcher admitted by the examination board successfully for the conferment of the doctorate degree.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a maximum two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

Date

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKING FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

A. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

A1. Unit of Analysis

For this study, the unit of analysis is individual. Various of trade association members is involved for the study, they are included Johor Bahru Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCCI), Johor Bahru Furniture Association (JBFA), Johor Master Builder Association (JMBA), Chartered Institute of Building Malaysia (CIOB, Malaysia) etc. association or its kind joining as the official entrepreneurial organizations or professional bodies in the research unit of analysis.

A2. Case Selection

The cases for this study involved data collection by 8 semi-structured face-to-face interviews of successful entrepreneurs. Chairman, CEO, Managing Director, Executive Director or Director in the selected company who are the business owners in various sectors and have identified in the survey frame work will be selected.

A3. Selection Procedure

The selection for each case is as follows:

- i. The researcher is responsible for conducting the 15 case studies. The selection is based on the following criteria:
 - The first criteria of this research focus on the current active member of existing trade associations with business of more than RM20 million and below RM100 million annual turnover.
 - The second criteria of this research will also be available for those who is not a member or any kind of social network organization/platform but someone who runs a successful SMEs/large scale with business of more than RM20 million and below RM100 million annual turnover.
 - The third criteria is the willingness of respondents to participate in this study.
- ii. The duration of interview would not be more than two hours for each case.
- iii. The respondents were asked to read and submit a signed informed consent.

B. OUTLINE OF CASE STUDY REPORT

The report of each case study is not in traditional narrative format. Instead, the adoption of the report format that is more similar to the investigative inquiry by addressing each of the stated objectives in a one-to-one dialogue forum.

The outlines of the case study report are as follow:

B1. Preliminary Pages

- i. Cover pages (Respondent Name)
- ii. Table of contents

B2. Actual Content of the Report

i. Introduction

(One to two paragraphs on the study background. Provide details of importance of entrepreneurial networking, SMEs development and etc. important financial data)

ii. Respondent's information

1. **Age:** _____

2. **Nationality** : Malaysian / Non Malaysian

3. **Educational Level** :

a. Secondary School level

b. Certificate

- c. Diploma
- d. Degree
- e. Master
- f. Doctorate

4. Nature of your business involve in which industry :

- a. Construction or its related business
- b. Manufacturing of Furniture or its related business
- c. Consumer Goods or its related business
- d. Information Technology or its related business
- e. Professional Services or its related business
- f. Others_____ (please state)

5. Number of employees :

- a. 1-20
- b. 21-50
- c. 51-100
- d. 101-300
- e. 301-500
- f. Others_____ (please state)

6. Annual Company (Group) Turnover :

- a. RM 20 – 30 million
- b. RM 31 – 50 million
- c. RM 51 – 100 million
- d. RM 101 – RM 300 million
- e. RM 301 – RM 500 million
- f. Others _____(please state)

7. Years in the business : _____

(Briefly explain)

8. How long have you worked in your current occupation?

C. NATURE OF INTERVIEW

Please be reminded that the nature of interview is that of an independent, dialogue-oriented discussion with the consent and compliance to the rules of the university. While conducting the interview, please be mindful of the

following:

1. The interview is not fully structured. Use your own personal interview style in gathering the required data. In other words, phrase the questions in your own way in case the respondent does not understand the original interview question.
2. Listening attentively when the respondent speaks. Avoid interrupting.
3. Using a video/audio tool such as recording device or recorded via virtual meeting (if necessary) to capture the essence of the discussion throughout the interview. Nevertheless, an official request permission from the respondent had granted before beginning to record.
4. Taking notes as you go along in the discussion, to assist in your analysis.

- END OF CASE STUDY PROTOCOL -

- APPENDIX A: VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTIONS SAMPLE

- Title:	Verbatim Transcript -P3
Number of persons in the interview:	2
Transcript Style	Direct / Strict Verbatim
File / Interview Duration:	64 mins
Transcriptionist / Transcribing Tool:	Mr. Weng Keat Kong / Cockatoo
Respondent/Interviewee:	Mr. Andrew W (AW)
Author/Interviewer:	Mr. Weng Keat Kong- Kenji (K)
Respondent/Interviewee Profile:	Executive Director, Family business, Steel Fabricator in construction sector.
<p>K: 0:00:00 Okay.</p> <p>K: 0:00:05 A very good morning, Mr. Andrew. Thank you for accepting my invitation, being one of my respondents in pertaining to my personal study in the DBA program.</p> <p>K: 0:00:19 Thank you. And good morning once again, Mr. Andrew. Hi, just have a quick shot so you understand about the research purpose today and you have read through the consent from everything and you agree that the interview will be recorded, right?</p> <p>AW: 0:00:36 Good morning, Kenji. Yep, I understand.</p> <p>K: 0:00:37 Thank you so much. Let's start with something. Mr Andrew, would you like to introduce a little bit yourself in five minutes, you know, about your work, about your career, things like that.</p> <p>AW: Thank you. Yeah, I'm currently acting as an executive director for Pelangi Teliti, a general contractor which is based in Johor Bahru, but with our so-called our business is around the whole Malaysia and maybe sometimes even in Indonesia and China. And recently we have some project in Myanmar as</p>	

well. So we mainly involved in this kind of works, we also involved in fabrication of non-pressure mixture. So this is some basic business that for our handling now

K:

0:01:26. I see, so you do in ASEAN country at the moment?

AW:

0:01:35

Currently,

AW:

0:01:37

Peninsular Malaysia will be my major market, so major travelling area.

K:

0:01:49

I see. So, I think you did frequently meeting a lot of people, right? Due to your job, and because of your, and your job of scope, things like that? I believe?

AW: Yes, correct. Local and European and even Asian. Quite a lot, quite a lot of different country people.

K:

0:02:13

Interesting. So, do you really understand in terms of the entrepreneurial networking, what do you see? When you see this phrase, entrepreneurial networking, the first thing come to your mind is what?

AW:

0:02:22

Yeah, I mean, in terms of because in current market or so-called we can say that now is globalization. So we are, we are, it's not only that so-called outside of our trade or outside of our core business in order we can gather more info, the market trends, so exchange info. The most important thing is we need to have information due to the globalization. So this entrepreneurship networking is important in order that we can gather different kind of industrial information which that we do help

AW:

0:03:24

not only for the company, our own personal development also is good to have this kind of networking.

K: Interesting that you talk about, it will eventually help you as a person to grow your sort of development skills in all sorts, right? Throughout the information sharing,

K:

0:03:52

and of course you understand the importance of the network outside of your core business. For example, you acting as a contractor. So perhaps it will be very advantageous for you to know many other people coming from any other industries such as logistic for instance,

K:

0:04:15

and any sort of trace, basically, it will help you as a business person.

K:

0:04:20

Am I right to say so?

AW:

0:04:21

Yeah.

K:

0:04:23

All right.

K:

0:04:23

Do you have any sort of strategies when it comes to networking? Any sort of strategies you have?

K:

0:04:32

Or any sort of planning that you have?

AW:

0:04:35

Currently, I'm a council member for this Johor Bahru Master Builder Association. We are actually gathering all the contractors, like civil, mechanical, CSA, MEP. So we gather around to share out the industry information. Besides that, in fact, we are also a member for this Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and so-called American Malaysia Chamber of Commerce as well. So with these two chamber of commerce, we can have different kinds of people around the world, maybe from the US, from the British and also other industries. So we can have more information around the world.

AW:

0:05:29

These people may travel a lot throughout the conversation with them, we may have more information which is helping us a lot. And besides that, we are also the Malaysia International Chamber of Commerce member, which they share a lot of the whole Malaysia industry development, what is happening on what kind of industry. So from there we can pick up some information which is quite helpful for us. Due to we are a general contractor, we may require this kind of info when we have a meeting up with related industry players

AW:

0:06:21

or maybe when they want to have development or when they need to have any kind of so-called expansion, then we are in place and we can share our point of view as well. K: Do you enjoy the networking activities? Do you enjoy them?

AW: Very much. Meeting of all kind of people that make our life more interesting in fact. K: True, true.

So you tend to listen up a lot of new interesting things that beyond your sort of knowledge and sometimes you'll be amazed by the fact that there are so many interesting around the world. AW:

Yep, correct, correct, correct. K: And how often do you actively get involved in this kind of entrepreneurial networking activity, say

K:

0:07:17

once per month or twice per week, things like that?

AW:

0:07:23

I would say that averagely at least one activity per month at this moment. Yeah. Yeah, because sometimes, sometimes maybe two, three times one month and then the other month there is no activity. So I would say that average up lah,

K:

0:07:40

So do you gain anything during the networking session?

AW:

0:07:47

Sorry, come again? I think the line is a little bit...

K:

0:07:52

Did you gain anything in the networking session? Apart from information sharing and all this, you

know, or how you or the other question that I may rephrase a bit. How would you see the value in networking?

AW:

0:08:09

We start information, we can meet a lot of different kind of people and from there we know, we can get to know what other culture is and the other of other country and what kind of living style and their own country, their culture, their lifestyle and the communication skill is actually one of the key element that I may learn from this kind of networking.

K:

0:08:44

Great, so you see communication skills as the value in your networking session?

AW:

0:08:51

Well, as for self-improvement purposes. Yep, yep, yep. Right, great.

K:

0:08:58

And do you have any sort of opportunity that, networking opportunity in your own region? Do you have to travel to KL for networking? Or you have something very similar in your region, for example, in Johor Bahru, where you are residing?

AW:

0:09:19

Both, in fact, both also I participated, for example, that I just newly, recently I just joined one American chamber, Malaysia chamber of commerce luncheon event and also this British Malaysia Chamber of Commerce event in KL. And the local, I mean in my region, the JMBA, I also

AW:

0:09:49

involved, also participated in this JMBA, which is my so-called other associations. K: So basically you travel for networking purposes from JB to KL. That is the current plan right? AW: Yes, and we are also planning that from the JMBA side, we are planning to have some networking sessions with Melaka, Penang and Perak side. So this is my future, so coming soon, this activity

AW:

0:10:36

is coming soon. So I would say that I will travel around the world or even around the country or even around the world for the networking purposes.

K:

You yourself as a business owner, do you encourage people like yourself to take part in entrepreneurial activities and why? AW: Sorry, come again, the sound is still dimmed just now. I also seen my internet connection is unstable.

K:

0:11:19

All right, you yourself as a business owner, my question is you yourself as a business owner, would you encourage people like yourself or your friends that take part in entrepreneurial networking activities? Would you encourage? AW: Yes, of course.

AW:

0:11:36

Yes, of course. Yeah. I have my own personal experience that I can benefit from this kind of networking session and I would like to share it out with my friends, even my staff and my business partners. So that in order that this good, so-called good things, we can share out and pass around so that everyone can develop themselves not only for the company's sake but for their own personal development also. K: I see, I see. Good, good. And you think as a

K:

0:12:18

networking, what do you think about a networking organization platform, How to achieve a sustainable networking platform? What do you think? When I say sustainable networking platform, maybe let me define further a little bit the question. When we talk about sustainable networking platform,

K:

0:12:39

meaning to say that these networking networks itself can last for a hundred years and even longer, 200 years. And what's your view about it? For example, giving you for example, Freemason club founded a few hundred years ago, you know,

K:

0:13:03

and it lasted until now. It's some people share with me that, that is the one of the oldest networking platform that he leveraged in the club. And there are some interesting elements for this kind of networks can last for a very long time. For example, I come across that the Malaysia International Chamber of Commerce even founded in 1890 something, more than 100 years ago.

K:

0:13:43

These platforms must have a very good element so that people will just stay on and continue with the membership.

K:

0:13:51

That is very important.

K:

0:13:52

Why so?

AW:

0:13:53

culture and the leader, so-called, what I mean leader is like the management level, like president, those, the few major, the big pools, so-called, with their good leadership, I believe that they will be passed on year by year or annually. should be inserted in the organization. We do not think that we wish to have more professional people or so-called they can lead the organization well, they can have some informative activity. It's not like sometimes a lot of people talk that gathering is drinking, eating, talking

AW:

0:15:14

without giving any kind of information. So what I mentioned here is the information is not only related to the industry that you are in. Maybe the current situation, the worldwide, how you feel, how you think, the information exchange, the idea exchange and the platform must be so-called have a proper proper area, proper organization that they will create some environment that is comfortable. It's not that we have gathering inside the or so-called have the function inside the some compitium, no. This kind of at least they

AW:

0:16:10

have some proper place to let this kind of networking be held on. K: Yeah. Great, great, great. You have answered a few key points. I'm actually taking notes while you're talking to share your sharing. Culture is one thing, then you talk about leadership and professionalism is something that you highlighted and also I captured something that this particular organization must be well organized or in another word structured.

AW:

0:16:52

Yep.

K:

0:16:54

I can't say bureaucracy is like certain structure.

K:

0:17:00

Be it structure also, but at least it must be a very well organized network.

AW:

0:17:08

Yep. Correct.

K:

0:17:10

Did I miss any important things when you are sharing all this?

K

&

AW:

0:17:14

Did I miss out anything? Because to be honest you capture everything. You capture the point but I talk a lot but the key point is that it's what you mentioned just now. Correct, I only can capture the key point. Talk too long I cannot type also. Otherwise I will lose my focus. that yes so maybe I move on to another very important research question you know but the link to the answer that you just just responded is your

K:

0:17:48

organization have a structured have their own structured system for example as a being as a council member of JNBA you think that it's a structured organization? AW: Yeah, I would say that the JMBA is quite organized. I can say that the structure is quite established. While actually the most important thing is the leader, which I mentioned just now. And luckily, for our past few presidents and key members, they are very good. And our current president also is quite an aggressive person. He is now taking another approach to the whole industry.

AW:

0:18:50

He started to have a connection with our government-linked agencies like CIDB, DOSH, and also professional bodies like IEM, PAM, so that we can get to know the current government policy and what kind of help or assistance that CIDB can offer to contractors. At the same time, CIDB also needs us as a market player to feed them the current market situation or market information so that they can come up with a new policy or how to integrate with their policy. So I believe that this will be a win-win situation not only for contractors but also for the government agency.

AW:

0:19:54

I feel that it is a very good move, good decision, which we can link up with this kind of government agency to help not only for our own, but I can say that for the whole industry development as well. So this is what I mean that if you have a good leader, the organization can last longer. culture, we have this kind of culture and the culture can be passed on. And yeah, like we can do it. Hope that like for example, this day, JMBA can be one of like what Freemasonry is.

AW

&

K:

0:20:36

Maybe for the next 200 years, we are still around and with active key player or active organization for the industry, not only for the industry, but for the government agency as well. The relationship is there. K: Yeah. Great, great. So meaning to say that you have shared a lot of benefits and the recent development or recent movement about JMBA, what JMBA is going to do, that the activities and sort of development activities are under proper structured system right. For instance, it will be under for example a committee you know small committee

K

&

AW:

0:21:21

chaired by one particular person so that this particular person will be reporting to the council as a whole. Of course this particular council member will be reporting to the Supreme Council you know or sometimes people call executive council member that who is reporting to the president of the Organization so that you see correct there and is properly governance. Am I right to say so? AW: Yes, correct Correct. You see the success On all these linking with the government authorities and professional bodies

AW

&

K:

0:21:56

Yes, correct. K: And you know along the way, very interestingly, I didn't ask you in, I have set of question, but when you answer this, when you answer certain things you know, but this is, and this particular answer link to my another question. AW: Oh, that's good. K: You talk about leadership a lot and leadership is something that I would like to find out more from you. What do you think about leadership style you think is important for an entrepreneur?

AW:

0:22:41

Maybe I should say that we need to have different kind of management style for different type of generation. For example, I'm a 70s person, so the management style that I have may not suitable for those 90s, At the current stage, my company actually have a different level of staff, different generation of staff. So I would say that we only can use a so-called sub-approach for some of the younger generation. The most important thing is what we need to send them,

AW:

0:23:32

our company vision and mission. This is something that we have to highlight and to make sure that they understand. And also now at this moment, I should say, due to this pandemic, a lot of management, the so-called old-fashioned or the old-style management system may be

AW:

0:24:06

collapsed because of we can work from home, we can have mobile office, we can have different kind of meeting tools. Like last time, we have to have face-to-face meeting, have the physical meeting. We do not know what is Teams, what is Zoom, what is like Google Meet. So, but after this pandemic, this kind of online, so-called online app is appear and we have to adopt it and we have to use it. And we should say that the management style we can from HUB or we can from HUB, I mean HUB is like IQ-Powder, you cannot feedback. They instruct you, you do A, you go to A. You cannot come back with me

AW:

0:24:53

and say, hey, can I do B in this kind of B way or not. But now, after this pandemic, I feel that the management style will be slowly changed. In fact, from our company as well, my company as well, we are slowly changing our management style from the old pattern, old fashion that physical or so-called face-to-face from another like some sort of half-soft approach. You can use your own way as long as you do not breach our company policy, you do not breach the so-called our mission and mission and our some basic regulation. need the result. We are not giving you any instructions on how to achieve the result.

AW:

0:25:41

If you can have better way, faster and more efficient way, we will allow. For instance, we recently engaged one millennium engineer, which that we try, actually I'm trying to do to do to so-called to giving him more on the so-called free freedom on how to settle the issue or how to settle the problem or complete the task with his own way, his own thinking, his own method. But of course, we as experienced staff, or I have instructed my experienced staff to assist him on some technical issue or some information that he required. Then from there, I will see that what kind of management style or management way to be more suitable and efficient.

AW:

0:26:50

Because I should say that now we have to change from the traditional way to a new way, which that to shift to our current situation. Yeah.

K:

0:27:04

Great.

K:

0:27:05

Despite that you, the fact that you encourage work from home and this is this being a very controversial topic nowadays because Alan Musk now changed his mind for not allowing so much of his staff to work from home and I said you know eight hours per day things like that you know I have to comply in certain issue and however you do think about the work from home as long as your staff can settle the problem efficiently, that is fine with you because

K

&

AW:

0:27:42

the day you are moving towards to a result-oriented organization. Am I right to say? AW: Yes, correct.

K: You can use 10 hours, you can use 5 hours, even if you can use one hour to settle the problem efficiently, that's okay. AW: That's correct. Because at this current, especially after this pandemic, we realized that there's a lot of things that maybe we aren't aware of because all the while we are having to for site staff, maybe eight to six, and then eight to seven.

AW:

0:28:22

And there's a fixed type of work, how you work. And maybe we act like a, I should say that, maybe I will not say use the word robot, but we are in a systematic way, you know, in that like, from A, you have to do B, you have to do C. But after this pandemic, or during this pandemic,

AW:

0:28:45

I realized that myself, I feel that why I should be going through the B process, why I can from A to C. Maybe the B is just for some minor touch up or we try to shorten up a task. But of course, for the site construction section, the physical attendance is still a must, I should say, because it is quite difficult for some issues to be settled. But we are using more technology, new technology to improve on how to make things good because sometimes when side people they have issues, we as a so-called we are not at the site, we do not know what is happening but we're implementing

AW:

0:29:53

because now we are investing some of the new gadget, new technologies like drone, like those are more higher spec computers and then those kind of things that from the photo from the things that they send back then I will be more easy to understand compared to last time based on photo they don't know how to explain and with this kind of issue that they are facing during the meeting. So something that we have to make changes from time to time. Maybe the result may be not as good as the previous way, but sad to say that we have to change ourselves, our mindset in order we can catch up with the environment.

K

&

AW:

0:30:56

You talk about a lot of your staff, things like that. Do you think that staff motivation is important? AW: Yes, of course. K: Because you talk about how you apply the technologies and all these. I believe you are not the one who use the new technology however you did encourage your staff to use this kind of technology and you don't mind to invest. Am I right to say so? As long as they know how to use it. You don't mind to

K

&

AW:

0:31:28

buy expensive drone, fly here fly there to take some very nice good photo. AW: So, besides that, another thing that I will encourage my engineers or my staff to attend some courses, so-called new skill. For example, like Microsoft project, some motivation course, some kind of new know-how. Maybe it is not related to their current work scope, but when I feel that this motivation course or this kind of courses that suitable for their own development, I will encourage them to attend. But of course this will be

AW:

0:32:20

subsidized or paid by our companies. So that in order to for them that a few that we are not working as a engineer I'm not looking as a contract documentation. I not only work as a Account, cash out while the company is sending me to learn something new It may not help in your your current work, but it may give you another kind of knowledge knowledge. For instance, I'm sending my project team to attend some training course

AW

&

K:

0:32:56

so that they can have more skill on how to use Microsoft Project or even Microsoft Excel. Maybe in this, from here, they can know all. This can be help on the work, I can do more things, I can do more this and that, so that they will feel more easy and happy when they come into this kind of related things. K: Great, you hit about some key words, staff satisfaction, not boss satisfaction, staff satisfaction. You as a boss, you also have to make them happy right so that they can keep within the job longer.

AW:

0:33:42

Yeah so because okay happy stuff will come with uh this is my personal belief ah when the staff is happy and motivated the outcome the result that higher than what you pay for. And also I do not encourage my people or so-called or I'm not happy with my people, my workers or my staff that work just because of work.

AW:

0:34:08

They can't work because of they want the salary, they need to pay the installment for their car, their house, their living expenses. I always think that we must have a career path for them on how to develop them. Maybe one day, this guy is no longer with us. Maybe after the course, after the training, one or two years, he will leave our company.

AW:

0:34:29

But I still feel that it's worth it to pay for them for the courses and for the training. Yeah, because for me, when they feel happy, when they feel happy, they will stay longer and they will, the result, and I should say that the cost, the cost of settling the issue,

AW:

0:35:05

complete the task will be minimized. And we save some time, time is money. Another thing that maybe the resources and maybe other thing that hidden which that you cannot use numbers or money to count and this is contribute to the company grow as well.

K:

0:35:31

Great, great, great because of your staff are motivated so you so that you think you think that in your opinion that they tend to be working very efficiently so that your overall production cost will be minimized because of you are very results oriented. They can just set up the issue. So eventually the employer and or the company will be benefited as well.

K

&

AW:

0:35:56

Great, great. Do you think that staff motivation is one of the entrepreneurial skills? AW: I think so,

yeah I believe so. And also, okay talk back about the networking, you know just like I said at the beginning, yeah in the networking we can always share how we motivate our staff, how to motivate, what kind of benefit or what kind of things that so-called rewards that can motivate the staff. So this is something that we can exchange or we can gather from the networking as well.

AW:

0:36:54

And how we treat maybe sometimes some company or they will have some team building or they can have, they will have some dinner, good food, and maybe drinking session or how, or a short trip to refresh their mind, to forget about the work, and just enjoy the holiday, so called.

AW:

0:37:34

So I think this is something that can motivate our staff as well. When they are motivated, they will feel that they are aware of how the company treat them and they may feel that we are so-called the important assets for the company. They are the value, maybe they consider that the core value may be created by them when they have a same thinking, same mindset as the management,

AW:

0:38:17

then I believe that the company or this particular corporation can be grow bigger and have more development.

K: I see. So it seems that you have some sort of succession planning in your organization or you think it's too early for you to plan for succession? How you help your middle management to grow to a upper level top management level from a PM to a GM for example?

AW:

0:38:56

Yeah, we have come into my mind, we have some short term plans and some long term plans. Short term plan is we have to let them have some experience. the experience is quite important. Besides on the so-called, I would say that the book from the books, the experience may be different from what the teacher teaches you in the school. And also, another thing is we have to, the long term plan is we have to

AW:

0:39:32

let them have some additional courses. For example, project managers, maybe they lack of the management skill or they lack of the so-called additional, how you handle the human relationship skill. So maybe the way that they manage the staff personnel and the way that they manage the the whole company staff is totally different because when he become a GM, he is not only dealing with engineer, dealing with the technical people they have to handle or they have to

AW:

0:40:15

give the manage the like no like HR department, the account department, the QS, the purchasing. So I will let them to have some more additional value-added courses like out management. In fact, I encourage my project manager to attend some management course. Maybe if he's willing to take up the MBA, this will be great and we'll be trying to subsidize him from the school fee. So training is another key point in order we can grow our people from not only from

AW:

0:41:09

PM to GM, but maybe from engineer to PM. So that's why I say that we have to let our staff know this is not just for a job, it is a career for them. We have to prepare the career path and we have to discuss with them to let them know, okay, until certain part, we hope that you can achieve this kind of level, so that they have the motivation, they know what they need to do in order to achieve this kind of achievement.

K:

0:41:53

Interesting. So you tend to build a career path, a chart from A to Z, even for project engineer, one find it, it can be a senior project engineer, then all the way to manager, and so forth.

AW:

0:42:13

Right, I think the same.

K: So apart, you talk about how you help your staff to build their skills and all this. Do you yourself, you yourself as an individual, learn anything from your from JMBA for example? Do you attend any new skill? Have you learned anything new from from your

K:

0:42:35

platform?

AW:

0:42:38

Yeah okay first is how we communicate with those government agencies. Because when we approach the agency, we are not acting as a contractor. We are not as a contractor to talk to the agency. We are using the other identity as a council member of JNBA to deal with this kind of government agency and I feel that this is something that we I learned something new that which that the approach of different kind of group with different kind of identity it can be very much different. Today, for example, today I'm still a very junior guy, junior council member, which maybe lack of some experience.

AW:

0:43:48

We do not know how to communicate with, maybe my communication with the others of other association or others body, even like government agency. These kind of things that may not happen before I'm joining JMBA. So we cannot use that, okay, because I'm a contractor,

AW:

0:44:08

I'm a so-called boss here, but in JMBA, everyone is boss. So how to communicate and how to, the mindset has to be changed, and I feel that what I learned from there is how to position myself and how to assist other people, others to grow the JMBA together.

AW:

0:44:38

The so-called, how you put it this way, the teamwork. The teamwork is something important for us.

K: Great, you shared about communication skills and the communication or management approaches. When you talk to the government entity, you tend to follow certain protocol.

K:

0:45:04

When you talk to higher level of management people, then it's different style. That's sort of the power and the skills that you learn as a transferable skills you know within your network. Did you transfer this skill that you have learned from JMBA back to your company? AW: I haven't yet. Now we have to do a teamwork. Have you passed on this I should say that I just started the pass on in my company.

AW:

0:45:41

I mean, we just form up a team with some new staff and existing staff. the special task force for certain issues. So from there I am actually doing some experiments on if I did not start in, how they settled the issue, how they complete the task, how they do this thing and do that. If I step in, what is their reaction? So from there, I need to know that what kind of approach

AW:

0:46:39

that is most suitable for them, for this group, for this team of people. With my, so-called, with my

participation or without, the result will be much faster and more efficient. So until today, I'm still doing this experiment. So I feel that Very soon I will get to know that what kind of approach that I will take to

AW:

0:47:14

manage this team. K: But you have started something that you have decided to pass on some skill to them. However, you still in the in the transition period, you know, or in the experimental stage to test on certain topic. you know, certain things, then you see, then you tend to know, okay, what sort of style that you learn from JMBA or MICCCI so that you can further your skill or transfer your knowledge to your staff.

AW:

0:47:44

Yes, correct. Yeah, okay. K: Interesting. So, you have then attended a lot of events, you know the importance of being an entrepreneur and you know entrepreneurial networking

K:

0:48:05

and what are the most important core values what do you think? You did talk about leadership, you did talk about communication skills, you talk about culture right but what are the most important you just give me one that you think is the priority, the first important. Of course there are many important things in life. So what are the most important things that you think is

K:

0:48:35

important to share with me?

AW:

0:48:38

widened my horizon, the field of view is totally different from what I so-called the event that I attended for this BMCC. Before that I was thinking that okay it is something beyond of my imagination or beyond my know-how. I mean the so-called what I thought is totally different and I feel that in JB we cannot have, we will not this kind of event that will happen daily and maybe not even in other places in Malaysia. So this event is something like to widen my view, widen my horizon so that

AW:

0:49:51

it's really a wow event for me. Wow, yeah, it's very impressive. And I, what I learned from there is the person is not only, you know, living in their comfort zone. Now most of people is living in their comfort zone. Yeah, I live here very comfortable. I would not rather to exclude myself to another new adventure or new different things. This is not important to me. At this moment, I will feel that it's enough for me. Enough means that I will no longer have the urge or the hunger to get to know more things

AW:

0:50:46

or to get to know more experience, especially in life experience. I just say whatever it is. So after this event I feel that the world is still very big for us to explore. There's nothing, there's no limitation and I feel and I learn. This is something that wish that if I still stay in my comfort zone, there's a lot of things that I do not know. And I will not get to know. So I really feel that with this kind of networking, with this kind of so-called social life, it

AW:

0:51:31

will widen my view for the horizon or I can say that the view on others people or others culture.

K:

0:51:41

Yeah. I see.

K:

0:51:42

So in your view that learning is limitless or no boundaries, so that this is how it keep motivate yourself to break through your comfort zone so that you can continue to widen your horizon to improve inside or some people for foresight or far-sighted future plan. You have a better route map in your mind. In the past without attending all this event you may think that you are like that. You cannot think, you cannot feel because there's no new input. After you know more people then you realize the world is very big and you correct only one of the small person in this world so that you see that the sky is limitless

K

&

AW:

0:52:32

with that you tend to welcome all the things because you are no longer a frog in the well so that you think now I know something that different from my perspective and that is something good for you to learn so with this you become a core value in the entrepreneurial network to improve your your foresight. AW: Yeah yeah K: so that's why you did gain value in the networking session then right? AW: Yeah of course so I from what I experienced on this kind of

AW:

0:53:11

networking and I will feel that this is something that a lot of people is lacking of including myself and my staff. So I will based on my own experience, my own personal experience, I will share with them that okay the world is not that only here, the world is so big, to get more knowledge or to get more things, to get to know more, widen your horizon. You don't limit to yourself. There's a lot of things that you can explore. So that's why I feel that it's not only that for my own personal,

AW:

0:53:57

personal but I would rather share out my experience or my new thinking or my new point of view to my staff in order to develop them. So when they are developed, I do believe that this will bring some benefit to the company as well.

K: So it now comes to the last of my research question. So after we talk about the values, we talk about style, we talk about skills, we talk

K:

0:54:44

about many things under the McKenzie framework. Do you think that one particular or a structural sustainable entrepreneurial networking model, if there is a model, do you think that this model will help to boost the entrepreneurial activities so that everybody tends to gain value from it? If there is one particular model exists?

AW:

0:55:15

Okay, this is something that

AW:

0:55:17

I would say that okay, based on my experience of different kind of so-called organization the module may not be the same with different culture.

AW:

0:55:44

For example, the American is totally different from the British. The British is different totally from Malaysian. Even our Malaysia, the Chinese is different from Indian, is different from Malay. What I should say that I still emphasize is the leadership. For example, in China, the culture or the thinking or the mindset of Chinese, of China people is different from Japanese. It's not on the quantity.

AW:

0:56:21

And they are talking about the long term planning or long term investment. While China is more

focused on the immediate or short return. Looking at the ROI, it's a different perspective for both countries. not have a standard model, the only key element that will bring the sustainability is only the leadership and how the leader and how they pass on one to one. China, all those kingdoms in China will fall because of their system, their inherited system.

AW:

0:57:12

There are some big, very big problems. When the king is good, maybe the son is not good. When the son, they have to pass on to the elder son. If the elder son is not good, means that the country will be no good as well. So it's something that the leadership from time to time, or the so-called the good leader have to be selected in order to get those organizations to be, state to have the sustainability.

K:

0:57:56

I see, so that a standard module or model may not be applicable due to the differentiation of cultures and many other factors. However, the key of success is the leadership style so that you can bring your networking organization more successful or becoming a more sustainable one because of the leadership. It depends how the leader think and how the leader grow this particular networks, right?

AW:

0:58:35

Yep, correct. The model may not be the most important one, but the leader is important because the leader play the role in manipulating or in executing the model because there are some others respondent

AW:

0:58:54

did feedback to me, you know, because the world is changing. You cannot use model A for 20 years and this model keep changing, keep evolving in different time. For example, like we just mentioned

AW:

0:59:10

about the old-fashioned style. However, this old-fashioned style is the most efficient style 20 years ago.

K:

0:59:22

20 years?

AW:

0:59:23

Yeah. But now, if you use the same style, after 20 years, it is no longer applicable. However, this style is the most effective one, those days. That's why those old bosses tend to like the old style because they are those skills that they are things that they learn in the past so that they think that it can last forever however it doesn't it doesn't make sense you know in the recent digital era

K:

0:59:53

yes people talk about work from home the old-fashioned management process cannot accept work from home how to work from home?

AW:

1:00:02

Correct.

K:

1:00:04

5 working days? Now people talk about 4 working days. AW: Yes, correct.

K:

1:00:10

Now no longer 4. People still want their staff to work 6 days a week. Sometimes you work every day.

Did this maintain this kind of staff form? So that with that we understand change is also important so that model must be keep evolving.

AW:

1:00:30

Yeah correct. K: Keep learning new things.

AW: You can say that okay maybe maybe you should put it this way like for example for the previously the Japanese they encourage the 5S and then the 5S until today they still people is uh are following but I uh But we are introducing this industrial 4.0 which will bring in a lot of automation, a lot of so-called robots to replace humans. However, we need to modify it to switch to the current situation, the current networking

AW:

1:01:19

environment. So, the same thing, the model for maybe, what you said, 20 years ago, the model is good for the past 20 years, but it's not that they are so-called, they are not, maybe some of them are still applicable and good for the current 10 years or maybe the next 10 years. But however, the leader needs to be changing, dare to change. Maybe 10 out of 20 is still useful and is still okay to implement at this moment. So he must be there to change. If not, we say

AW:

1:02:10

this is the tradition, we cannot change. This is the old way, nobody wants to change, nobody was there to change. And after that, they may bring the organization into an attack They are not able to sustainably for the for for for a longer time. Yeah, so I should say Still still the same thing is a leader have to pay the most important key to Make the organization to be Sustainability.

K: Yeah

K

&

AW:

1:02:42

So I conclude that one of your key points, leaders must know how to change and able to change.

AW: Yeah, correct. K: They know they must change but they don't change. They know that change is important but somehow you cannot change. You cannot convince yourself to change. So that if a leader cannot change himself, how you change your organization, you cannot bring...

AW:

1:03:02

Yes, correct.

K: By example is important in leadership skills in my opinion.

AW: Yep, yep, yep, yep.

K: Thank you and that's the end of the session Mr. Andrew and thank you so much for answering me all the important questions and the session was very fruitful for me and I wish you luck in your future encounterment and future undertaking.

K:

1:03:40

And good luck and drive safe when you're on your way to KLANG.

AW:

1:03:44

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you so much and goodbye. Goodbye.

K:

1:03:50

Thank you. Thank you.

AW:

1:03:51

Thank you.

End of Transcription