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**TRUST IN CROSS-CULTURAL B2B FINANCIAL SERVICE RELATIONSHIPS:
THE ROLE OF SHARED VALUES**

Abstract

Trust in business-to-business supplier-customer relationships in financial services is an area of considerable research interest. The bulk of prior empirical research in this field has concentrated on trust in business relationships within a Western cultural context. However, shared values are acknowledged to be an important antecedent to trust. The premise of this study is that in circumstances where there are substantial cultural differences between parties to a supplier-customer relationship, these differences will be reflected in shared values, which will in turn be reflected in differences in the nature of trust. A qualitative study was conducted among business bankers and their corporate clients in the context of the United Arab Emirates. In all 170 respondents were interviewed; of these, 160 were paired respondents, that is, where a client and banker from the same business relationship were interviewed (yielding 80 interview dyads). Substantial differences with respect to trust were found between relationships that involved only Emiratis, those that involved Emiratis and non-Emiratis, and those that involved only non-Emiratis. For Emiratis mutual trust is substantially based on family and clan ties and exhibits strongly affective characteristics. For non-Emiratis trust is largely based on business considerations, and exhibits strongly cognitive characteristics.

Keywords

Trust; Culture; Shared Values; Relationship Marketing; Business-to-Business

TRUST IN CROSS-CULTURAL B2B FINANCIAL SERVICE RELATIONSHIPS: THE ROLE OF SHARED VALUES

Introduction

In this article we address an important issue that arises out of two prominent recent trends in the financial services sector. First, financial services are increasingly a globalised industry and, second, concerns are often raised about the integrity of marketing practices within the sector (Ashton 2014). The former concern raises questions about financial services interactions that take place between people of different cultural backgrounds, while the latter concern leads naturally to the consideration of trust in relationships between financial services providers and their customers. Sirdeshmukh et al (2002) argued that trust was particularly important in service contexts, while researchers have often remarked that trust is a particularly important aspect of the marketing of financial services (Ashraf, Robson, & Sekhon, 2015, Ennew, Kharouf & Sekhon 2011, Harrison 2003, Moin, Devlin & McKechnie 2015, Sekhon, Ennew, Kharouf & Devlin 2014). However, the interaction between these two concerns—globalisation and trust—raises a more complex question: do people from different cultural backgrounds conceive of trust in financial service relationships in the same way? Alternatively: is the fundamental basis for trusting behaviour in financial services similar, or different, across cultures?

The context that we have selected to investigate these questions is one in which inter-personal interactions are particularly important, so that cultural differences will be manifest to the parties to the relationship. Our study focuses on relationships between business bankers and their corporate clients in the United Arab Emirates. This context provides an opportunity to focus squarely on the matter of interest for several reasons. The business relationships involve frequent face-to-face interactions where cultural aspects of behaviour will become

apparent. The parties to the relationships are readily distinguishable in terms of their primary cultural background, whether citizens of the UAE (Emirati) or international guest workers (non-Emirati). In addition, there are likely to be substantial cultural differences between the parties since the Emirati Arab culture is, we shall argue, highly distinctive (Al-Omari 2008).

Conceptually, this study is grounded in the extensive stream of research on trust in relationship marketing that has followed from the seminal work of Morgan and Hunt (1994). This influential conceptual framework has recently been used in related studies to the one we report here, for example in researching the role of culture in international relationship marketing (Samaha, Beck & Palmatier, 2014, Samiee, Chabowski, & Hult, 2015) and in exploring customer-supplier relationships in the banking industry, both in business-to-business and business-to-consumer contexts (Hurley, Gong & Waqar 2014, Wongsansukcharoen, Trimetsoontorn & Fongsuwan 2015). While being positioned within this stream of research, this study is distinguished by its focus on the influence of culture on trust in a financial services context. The principal contribution from the study is that fundamental aspects of trust can be influenced by underlying cultural values, so that the basis of trusting behaviour differs between people of different cultural backgrounds. This has important implications for marketing managers in the financial services sector who are responsible for managing cross-cultural supplier-client relationships.

The initial conceptual background to our research is elaborated in the next section. The subsequent section explains in more detail the qualitative research methods that were used to gather and analyse data relevant to our research topic. Following this, the findings from the empirical study are discussed, and two distinct models of culturally-influenced trust development—one for Emirati culture and a second for non-Emirati culture—are presented. The article concludes with a discussion of the practical implications of the work, suggestions for further research, and consideration of some limitations associated with the research.

The Emirati Cultural and Religious Context

The UAE relies heavily on foreign expertise to develop its oil, gas and financial services, as the indigenous Emirati workforce is small and under skilled in proportion to industry requirements (Pech, 2009, p. 57). Consequently, there are many international guest workers (non-Emirati) as well as UAE citizens (Emirati) in the workforce. As a consequence the demographic profile for people of working age in the UAE is unusual. In the age range 25-54 women make up only 23.7% of the UAE population, owing to the large number of male international guest workers. The overall population of the UAE is 5.78 million with a male-to-female ration of 2.18:1 across all age groups (CIA 2015).

This study focuses on differences in the antecedents to trust between Emirati and non-Emirati respondents. The former is a strongly homogeneous group, while the latter is more heterogeneous. Arabs in the UAE are Emirati, and international guest workers are defined as non-Emiratis. Non-Emiratis are granted work visas to remain in the country as long as they are employed, and must leave the UAE on termination of employment (Elessawy & Zaidan 2014). Emiratis are citizens of the United Arab Emirates, and represent 19% of the population, and non-Emiratis represent 81% of the population. While the heterogeneity of non-Emiratis makes generalizations difficult, their lifestyles differ in important ways from those of the native Emirati population. There is little or no socializing between the Emirati and non-Emirati populations. The primary motivation for non-Emiratis to be in the UAE is economic (Pech, 2009).

UAE culture is influenced by Islamic tradition as well as by Bedouin tribal values. Islam is perceived by its adherents to be a complete way of life; it is necessary to understand the religion in order to understand the business environment (Obeidat et al 2012; Parnell & Hatem 1999; Schuster and Copeland, 1996). For Emiratis the Muslim religion is the

fundamental and dominant force in their lives. It is integrated indissolubly with culture and shared values that are determined by centuries of nomadic desert existence. The Muslim religion moderates all the other cultural and shared values. The immediate core values associated with the Muslim religion are praying, believing, reading the Qur'an and charity (Pech, 2009, pp. 59–60).

Religion is one of the most significant facets of cultures. It plays a noteworthy role in most societies. Weber (1905) was the first to recognise the substantial role that religion plays in social change (Guisoa, Sapienzad, & Zingales, 2003). Religion affects not just the personal life of the individual, but it is also affects different facets of human social life, as well as the cultural, economic, and the political. The effects of religion on different aspects of society can be seen particularly in Islamic countries, where a Muslim as a person and as a member of society, has particular obligations and duties. On the whole, Islam affects all aspects of Muslims' lives in these societies (Nasrabadi, 2006). There are many references in the Qur'an to good and proper behaviour. Religion has long been playing a substantial role in influencing human behavior. Trust within religious groups is generally raised by cultural values (Siala, O'Keefe & Hone 2004).

Trust, Culture & Shared Values

Research into the antecedents of trust (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Ganesan, 1994; Guenzi & Georges, 2010; Mangindaan & Hendriana, 2013; Tyler & Stanley, 2007), and on building inter-organisational trust (Halinen, 1994; Sydow, 1998), represents an area of enduring interest. Business-to-business services markets, and financial services business markets, represent an increasingly important aspect of the global economy. The focus of this study is on the antecedents to trust and trust building in the context of business-to-business client/banker relationships.

Trust in a relationship marketing context is delineated in the seminal work of Morgan and Hunt (1994), who investigated independent tyre distributor relationships in the United States. Morgan and Hunt (1994) established that commitment and trust are key mediating variables in the process of relationship marketing, which they define as “all marketing relationships directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges” (p. 22). Their model provides a helpful starting point for this paper, since they posited the importance of “shared values” as the only antecedent to both trust and commitment. Subsequent empirical studies conducted in various contexts have confirmed that shared values, a concept also referred to as ‘similarity’ (Doney & Cannon 1997) and ‘value alignment’ (Kharouf, Lund & Sekhon 2014), are an important aspect of a relationship marketing approach. In a study of business-to-business marketing relationships in mainland China and Hong Kong, Sin et al (2005) found that shared values are an important component of a relationship marketing orientation. Kashyap and Sivadas (2012) explored the role of shared values in relationships between channel partners, finding that shared values motivated partners both to deliver contractual requirements and to go beyond those requirements and demonstrate behaviors that benefited the business relationships. In a study of customer relationships in the commercial banking sector, Yoganathan et al (2015) confirmed that shared values contribute to a relationship marketing orientation and to enhanced brand equity.

There are limitations to the Morgan and Hunt position. First, they define “shared values” through the narrow lens of organisational behaviour: the culture of the organisation only, rather than considering wider culture. In addition, they only studied one side of the relationship at a single point in time, and their findings were directed only at marketers and marketing activities. Their study does not include research on relationships outside the USA and does not address the wider context of the national culture or the culture of the country in which relationships are embedded. Nevertheless, this work has provided the foundation for

the conceptual framework of this paper, which extends the concept of “shared values” to the Arab/Muslim world.

Trust in the Arab world is deeply rooted in kinship and family connections. The hierarchy of relationships begins with the immediate family, then relatives, and then clan and tribe affiliates. Trust within the family and the clan is foundational because the bonds are founded on loyalty and saving face and honour for the family and tribe (Rice, 1999). This entails that trust is built on social status and connections instead of accomplishment and credibility, integrity and trustworthiness as perceived in the West (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). For instance, Hutchings and Weir (2006) note that while in the West it is conventional to negotiate with a counterpart after initial quotations have been obtained, in the Arab world negotiations are held with several counterparts simultaneously and the partner to win the deal will typically be the one with the strongest connections. Hutchings and Weir (2006) claim that relations of trust between business counterparts are vital to effective business transactions in the Arab world. Once trust is created, counterparts just need to give their word of honour; this is of greater significance than the written contract (Hutchings & Weir, 2006; Al Omari, 2008).

A concept that arises in the discussion of Arab cultures, and that arose in the empirical phase of this study, is *wasta* (Berger, Silbiger, Herstein & Barnes 2015, Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). *Wasta* is Arabic for connections or “pull”, a form of intercession or mediation; it is difficult to investigate because it takes very subtle forms and is “widely practiced and simultaneously denied by its practitioners and beneficiaries” (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993, p. 4). *Wasta* has changed over time from its tribal roots to become a national and organizational norm (Al Rayis and Al Fadli, 2004, p. 75). In a tribal setting, *wasta* mediation binds families and communities with the common aims of peace and well-being. *Wasta* often

involves a central character intervening on another's behalf to obtain an advantage (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993, p. 209).

Few studies have focused on culture and shared values as an antecedent of trust. There is a need for more research on specific culture and shared values contexts, and how these frame the interactions between counterparts. This research addresses this gap using a context that is known to be rich in cultural influences.

Research Methods

Empirical data were collected using qualitative semi-structured interviews with business-people and their bankers in the United Arab Emirates. The interviewer (and first author) is from the Arab culture and is bi-lingual in Arabic and English. In all 170 individuals were interviewed, of whom 70% were male and 30% female, and who ranged in age from 25 to 50. Women were, therefore, slightly over-represented in the sample compared to the overall working age population of the UAE (23.7% female). In most cases the interviews were paired so that where a business client was interviewed, so was the corresponding business banker (we refer to these pairs as 'dyads'). Ten additional individuals were interviewed. The sample of clients was selected by sector and size to be as representative as possible of the local economy. It is noteworthy that it was not possible to find an interview dyad consisting of an Emirati banker with a non-Emirati client; it appears that this type of relationship may not exist. Additional information on the sample is provided in Table 1. The research was carried out among a cross-section of Emirati and non-Emirati corporate clients, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) clients and UAE corporate bankers. There are 46 commercial banks operating in the UAE, of which 21 are Emirati and 26 are non-Emirati, and numerous Emirati and non-Emirati companies. The business clients were from oil, construction, services and

manufacturing sectors, including a range of company size – large, medium and small – within the sectors, see Table 2.

Forty respondents were interviewed more than once in order to clarify the transcripts and follow-up responses as part of the data quality and validation process, and 25 were re-interviewed during the data transcription, triangulation, data analysis and writing-up phases of the research. In addition to the interviews, the study benefitted from the advice of two key informants, one from the banking side (a senior employee of the Central Bank of Abu Dhabi) and one from the client side (a senior manager from a multi-national oil company). These individuals provided advice, from a practitioner point of view, on the conduct of the study, and provided a sounding board with whom to discuss the conclusions from the study as they emerged.

Respondents were telephoned to arrange appointments. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality and non-attribution. The interviews took place outside business premises, at neutral venues. The interview structure comprised semi-structured questions, then open-ended questions, and finally in-depth probing. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Respondents were asked to express their views, comments and opinions within the broad domain of trust-based business-to-business relationships. Ethical issues were considered and preserved through the research (Bell & Bryman, 2007). Ninety-five interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, sorted and coded word by word, but 85 respondents refused to be recorded, in which case notes were taken and were later checked for accuracy by the respondent (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ghauri, 2004). Qualitative data analysis was primarily handled manually, although NVivo used to store the entire qualitative data set (Sinkovics, et al., 2008; Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005).

[Insert Table 1 around here]

[Insert Table 2 around here]

Findings & Discussion

Cultural Antecedents to Trust

[Insert Table 3 around here]

[Insert Table 4 around here]

The results of the thematic analysis of the data are illustrated in Tables 3 (for the analysis of data from Emirati interviewees) and 4 (for the analysis of data from non-Emirati interviewees). Each Table presents illustrative quotations from the qualitative data to illuminate four main themes: social bonds, altruism, *wasta*, and cultural similarity, and each of these four main themes is broken down into sub-themes.

Analysis of the data indicates that affective trust arises from shared values, which comprise two elements: cultural similarity and social bonds. Both appear to be necessary preconditions to shared values; and, for Emiratis, the existence of shared values is the precursor for establishing a level of trust that would persuade an Emirati to enter into a business relationship. These findings build on Morgan & Hunt's work in the UAE context to demonstrate how important cultural aspects of shared values can be seen as an antecedent to trust, and how the shared values variable operates in practice.

Emiratis and non-Emiratis have very different perceptions of the antecedents of trust in banker–client relationships. The influence of culture on Emirati behaviour and beliefs with regard to the antecedents of trust in business relationships is fundamental. Emirati religion is fundamental to the cultural similarity. The Emirati Bedouins are tribal, and the tribe and tribal

system are fundamental to altruism, kinship, *wasta*¹, the importance of clan and kith, and the family and extended family. The affective value is more salient than the cognitive in trust formation. Ties within Emirati dyads are strong, and are based on social bonds. Emirati culture and shared values prioritise group goals and outcomes over those of the individual; people are defined in terms of their tribal and extended family membership. With this characteristic collectivism, Emiratis place high value on maintaining social relationships and harmony. This can be seen in the following quotations:

I like to deal with my relatives, with people with whom I have close family relationships.

When I deal with my people with whom there is a kinship, we feel relaxed, not worried, as we are both loyal and working hard to support each other (Emirati client 2).

Emiratis feel and think that they have obligations towards each other. They have to help their families first, then their clan, then their tribes and then the region (Emirati client 20).

Our findings suggest that social bonds are a stronger antecedent to trust among Emiratis than non-Emiratis and comprise the need for personal relationships *before* business transactions, the importance of *wasta* and the reliance by both parties on the past behaviour of the other as a predictor of future trustworthiness. In an Arab/Muslim context, the social bonds are strong among Emiratis, due to their tribal cultural inheritance. Social bonding between Emirati bankers and clients in the UAE provides customised services that develop relationships, allows the clients to trust and to be satisfied with the bankers' services, and assists in understanding and learning about the client's needs and expectations. Emirati counterparts have strong bonds with each other; they are empathetic and responsive on the basis of religion, culture and shared values (see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

¹ *Wasta* is Arabic for connections or "pull" and may be used as a form of intercession or mediation.

Cognitive and Affective Trust

UAE culture is based on personal relationships and a sense of local commitment. This is in contrast to characteristic responses from non-Emiratis, where a business opportunity may be identified and a business relationship formed, with no need to establish any closer friendship. Contrast the first two quotations below (from Emiratis) with the last two (from non-Emiratis).

We have a personal relationship with our clients. We believe in being with our clients not just for one transaction but to build a long-lasting relationship with them (Emirati banker L).

We have been dealing with our bankers for a long time. Personal relationships are important for us, but they are less important for non-Emiratis. (Emirati client 22).

I know that Emirati culture is different from our culture, but our friendships are one thing and our business relationships are something else. (Non-Emirati client 18)

I have good relationships with my clients, but I work according to documents, bank's policy and regulations. I have no time for socialising and emotions. Our business relationship was built after having a good experience with them. (Non-Emirati banker T)

The relationship between Emirati bankers and Emirati clients is a balanced or symmetrical relationship, and that of Emirati bankers to non-Emirati clients is asymmetrical: there is a mismatch between the factors that the two parties regard as important. This is particularly noticeable in respect of time invested in relationship building, where it can cause frustration and misunderstanding between Emirati and non-Emirati actors. Time invested in the relationship is very important to Emiratis, who spend considerable effort maintaining social relationships within their extended networks of relationships.

It takes time for us as Emirati partners to build a trust relationship, we need to meet and have coffee or lunch. We need to socialise and to know each other before starting our business.

This is very important for us. (Emirati client 13).

For the non-Emirati, who places a higher value on cognitive-based trust, and who may rely on the reputation of his financial services institution, financial products, contracts and documentation, these affective-based activities may appear to be a waste of time, unnecessary or meaningless (see figure 2).

Non-Emirati clients declared trust in the productivity and performance of their counterparts, without expressing a need to know them personally; they were not concerned about forming social relationships in this context. Non-Emiratis place more emphasis on the banking processes and documents than on personal relationships:

I work with my clients according to documents and the bank's policy and regulations (Non-Emirati banker R)

I don't mind the social part. I am very professional in my work, so I don't need a lot of interaction with my counterpart. It is hard for me when people want to talk to me about how things are going, and when they ask me about my family. I feel it is a waste of time, I am busy person (Non-Emirati client 23).

For the non-Emirati, who places a higher value on cognitive-based trust, and who may rely on the reputation of his financial services institution, financial products, contracts and documentation, these affective-based activities may appear to be a waste of time, unnecessary or meaningless (see figure 2).

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[Insert Figure 2 around here]

Conclusion, Managerial Implications & Suggestions for Further Research

Morgan and Hunt (1994) proposed that “the presence of relationship commitment and trust is central to relationship marketing” [p22] and that “shared values directly influence both commitment and trust” [p24]. However, the conceptualisation of shared values in the Morgan & Hunt KMV model focused only on organizational culture, not wider aspects of culture. Subsequently, researchers have corroborated the importance of shared values in relationship marketing. Relevant studies conducted both in financial services (e.g. Ashraf et al 2015, Sekhon et al 2014) and in other industry contexts (e.g. Kharouf et al 2014, Kashyap & Sivadas 2012) lend support to the proposition that shared values are an important antecedent to trust and commitment in marketing relationships. Nevertheless, quantitative studies that measure shared values using relatively few scaled items (for example, three items were used in the Sekhon et al (2014) study – sample item “My _____ has the same values as me”) are unable to explore the complexities associated with cross-cultural relationships. In this paper we report on a substantial qualitative study that has gained access to cross-cultural, business-to-business relationships in the financial services sector within an Arab country. Our findings suggest that the cultural backgrounds of the parties to the relationship substantially influence the shared values within the relationship, and hence the degree of trust and commitment that can be established within the relationship. Hence, we conclude that the cultural origins of the

parties to the relationship must be taken into account when considering the concept of shared values (Morgan & Hunt 1994) and related concepts such as similarity (Doney & Cannon 1997) and value alignment (Kharouf et al 2014).

The research reported here adds weight to the argument that trust is a culturally embedded phenomenon. Consequently, when investigating trust in financial services relationships, attention should be paid to the cultural context. It follows that generalising from empirical studies that have been undertaken in one cultural context (notably, within the North American business culture), to culturally distant contexts, such as the Arab world studied here, is fraught with difficulty. The non-Emirati participants in this study, while broadly aware of many aspects of Arab culture, generally preferred to approach trust in business-to-business relationships from a Western, predominantly cognitive perspective. These non-Emiratis face two difficulties in respect of building trust with Emirati business partners; first, they are often unsympathetic towards the Arab understanding of trust, and, second, they do not have the family and clan connections that would enable them to gain access to Arab networks of trust.

A number of implications for business practice emerge from this study. First, while cultural training courses may at one level prepare Western business-people to work in Arab countries, mere knowledge of Arab cultural practices is not enough since it provides access to neither the shared values of Arab business partners, nor to the networks of family and tribal relationships that underlie much Arab business. One may ask whether it is desirable, ethical, or even possible, to try to inculcate shared Arabic cultural values into Western managers posted to Arab countries. Second, an important practical implication that follows from this study is to understand that no matter how well trained in culturally-specific practices, someone from outside the Arab world may be at an inherent disadvantage when working in the Arab banking sector when compared to someone born into Arab culture. If, as many researchers have argued, trust is important in financial services relationships, and if, as we

argue here, trust is embedded in cultural values, then trust that develops without shared values is a weaker form of trust. Third, the most obvious practical implication of this finding is that, when selecting employees to manage customer relationships, cultural background is a relevant factor. The more important the customer relationship, the more advisable it is to align the cultural background of the customer relationship manager with that of key contacts in the client organisation. Fourth, In the UAE, non-Emirati relationship managers should pay attention to religion, culture and shared values, and especially to *wasta*, which plays an important role in building trust. *Wasta* plays a major role in the business negotiation process. Non-Emiratis should understand the importance of this networking concept in an Arab/Muslim context because it influences many business activities.

A number of implications for future research follow from this study. Most of what we think we know about trust within business-to-business relationships arises out of studies conducted in Western countries and in relationships between business-people with similar cultural backgrounds. This study examined interactions involving a Middle Eastern dominant culture and expatriates (non-Emiratis) largely from a Western cultural background. Clearly, the study of other countries where Western expatriates interact with different cultures would be interesting; for example, studies of cross-cultural banker-client relationships in other major financial centres outside the Western world, such as Singapore, Seoul and Mumbai.

Additionally, perhaps of even greater interest in a world that is becoming less dominated by the great Western economic powers, would be the effects on trust and business-to-business relationships of cultural differences between non-Western cultures: for example, when Chinese business-people form relationships with Africans, or when Arab business-people form relationships with Latin Americans. Finally, in the study reported here we focused on trust, culture and shared values, but did not attempt to measure relationship performance. A

quantitative study designed to investigate how these variables interact with relationship performance would be valuable from both the theoretical and the managerial perspectives.

Limitations

This article is based on a qualitative empirical study that was conducted among business bankers and their corporate clients in the UAE. This context was selected because it was expected to be a particularly good one in which to investigate the interaction between trust and cultural values in financial services relationships. It would be wrong to try to over-generalise from the results presented here. Because of the research context (B2B banking) face-to-face interactions were important in relationship building and management, and it was often the case that people of very different cultural backgrounds were involved in these interactions. In addition, this research context can be characterised as one where there is a clearly dominant, local culture (Arab Emirati). In other areas of financial services business, where customer relationships are largely or exclusively electronically mediated (for example, personal banking conducted by telephone or over the Internet) it is likely that, since cultural backgrounds are often ‘invisible’ online, the importance of cultural values will be diminished. Even where face-to-face interactions are important, where the cultural distance between the parties is less, the effects of cultural values on trust are likely to be lower. Finally, if this research were conducted in a financial centre that has no strongly dominant, local culture—a more multi-cultural centre—the results may be different.

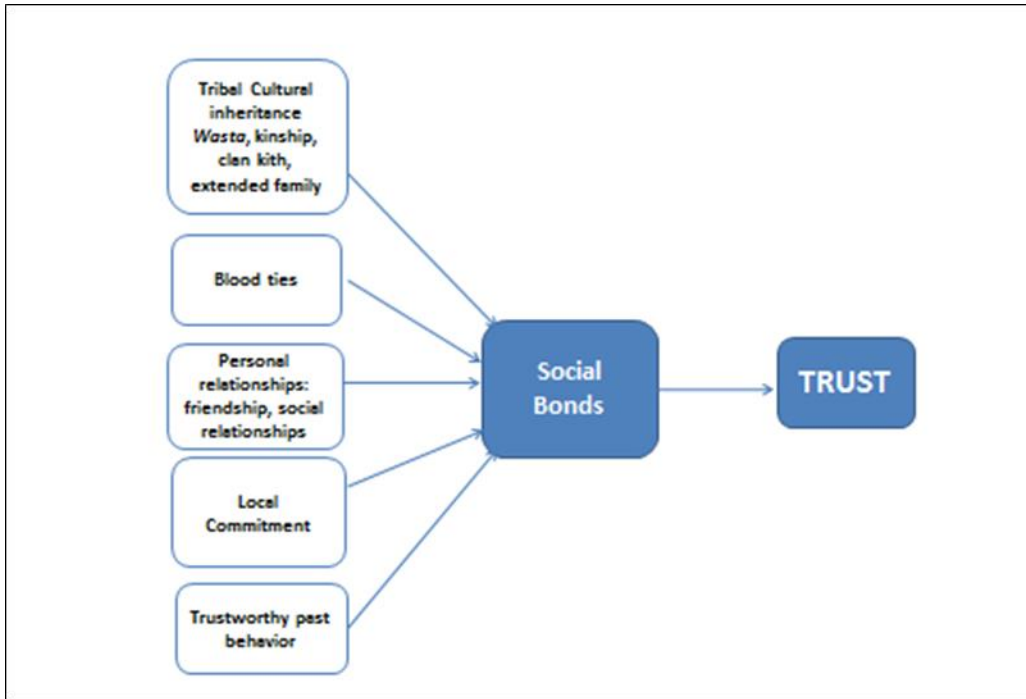
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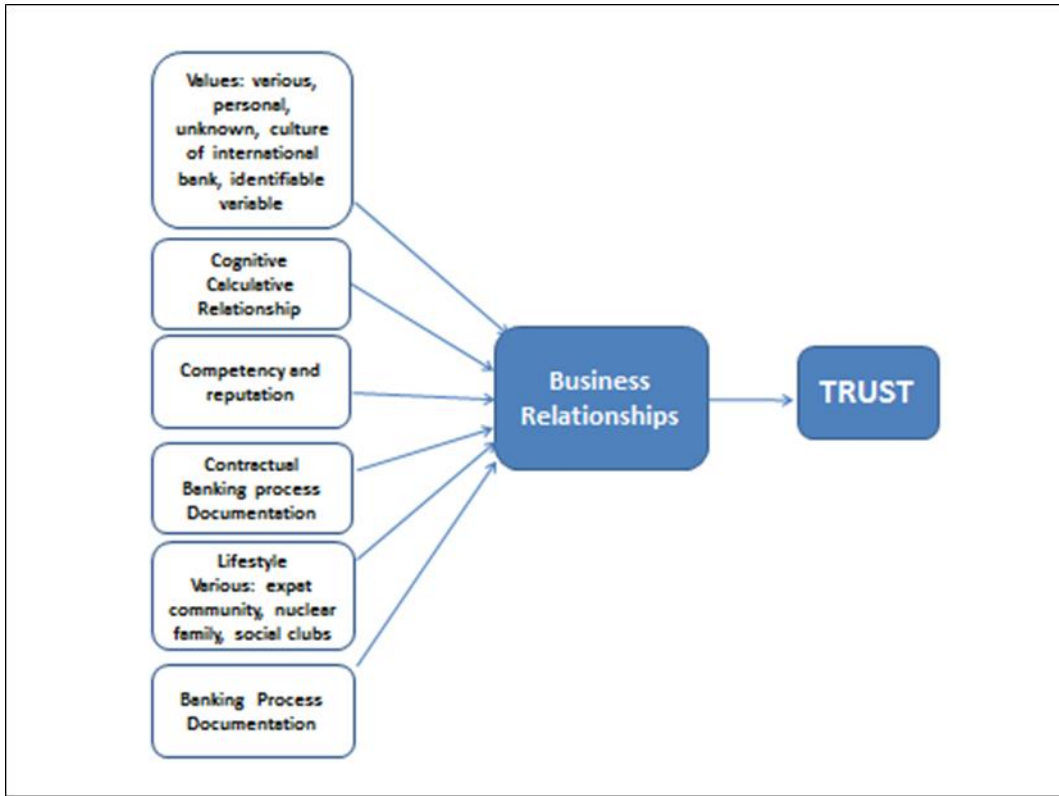
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Dyads	Number of interviewees and dyads
Emirati client/ Emirati banker	50 interviewees, 25 dyads (i.e. 25 Emirati businessmen and 25 Emirati bankers)
Emirati client/non-Emirati banker	66 interviewees, 33 dyads (i.e.33 Emirati businessmen and 33 non-Emirati bankers)
Non-Emirati client/non-Emirati banker	44 interviewees, 22 dyads (i.e. expatriates, most of them Westerners, 22 non-Emirati businessmen and 22 non-Emirati bankers)
Non-Emirati client/Emirati banker	0 (could not find any examples)
Total	160 interviewees, 80 dyads

Table 1: Description of the Qualitative Sample

	Large companies	Medium companies	Small companies	Total
Oil	15	6	0	21
Construction	10	8	5	23
Services	9	7	5	21
Manufacturing	5	5	5	15
Others (individual interviews)	3	1	1	5
TOTAL				85

Table 2: Qualitative Sample of Client Firms – Industry Sector & Company Size

SOCIAL BONDS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
<p><i>Themes</i> Family ties Kinship Personal Ties</p>	<p><i>Emirati bankers</i> “I am an Emirati. I have an Oxford business degree, and I feel I must still deal with a highly personalised and family-oriented business environment in which personal trust is as important as efficient cost accounting” (E Y)</p> <p><i>Emirati clients</i> “I prefer to stay with my Emirati banker, and I intend to do more business with him in the future. I prefer to deal with people I know, people from my family or country” (E 22)</p>
ALTRUISM	
<p><i>Themes</i> Self-sacrifice Clan loyalty Promise fulfilment Emotional loyalty Altruistic benevolence Moral obligation</p>	<p><i>Emirati bankers</i> “Hoping that this community can be developed more successful, more expanded, able to contribute to this community” (E G)</p> <p><i>Emirati clients</i> “My banker is a kind person, he helps me a lot; he cares for me and shows interest and concern in my business. He cares for our relationship” (E 22)</p>
TRIBALISM: WASTA	
<p><i>Themes</i> Authority/power Social exchange Hasten the process of document handling Gift exchange</p>	<p><i>Emirati bankers</i> “I think wasta is the ability to get things done that would be difficult to achieve otherwise” (E I) “Wasta is all about social exchanges” (E Y)</p> <p><i>Emirati clients</i> “If you needed to get approval for a business permit, then you might utilise the services of someone who has wasta, knowing who to see and what to do, thus saving you time and energy” (E 26)</p>
CULTURAL SIMILARITY	
<p><i>Themes</i> Shared backgrounds and traditions Similar values Respect for Emirati values Shared language Same social class and occupation Prominent and influential people</p>	<p><i>Emirati bankers</i> “I have a strong relationship with my counterpart; I trust him. My partner trusts me and considers me as a trustworthy person. We have a shared background; especially we have the same religion and language and share the same values. This maybe the reason we understand each other and feel secure. We have also common shared values, we are empathetic and friendly people” (E K) “I create a trust relationship with my Emirati clients by respecting them, especially when we have the same values and common interests. We build our relationship with our clients on certain values that we stick to” (E V)</p>

	<p><i>Emirati clients</i></p> <p>When doing business in culturally similar market, there is no question about money because we trust them and they trust us for our long relationship (E 4)</p> <p>“I trust my counterpart; we have the same background, culture, language and religion and we share the same perspective about things” (E 17)</p>
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Table 3: Concept Illustrations (Emirati Interviewees)

SOCIAL BONDS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
<p><i>Themes</i> Weak ties Calculated risk Formal documents</p>	<p><i>Non-Emirati bankers</i> “I have a friendly relationship with my Emirati counterparts, but when it comes to business and our work, I am a different person. My goal is increasing my profits and I am not willing to lose for the benefit of my counterpart” (NE J)</p> <p><i>Non-Emirati clients</i> “When I build a trust relationship with Emirati, it takes time. However, building trust with non-Emirati agents take less time, as we both depend on documentation” (NE 12)</p>
ALTRUISM	
<p><i>Themes</i> Mutual help Reciprocity Calculation</p>	<p><i>Non-Emirati bankers</i> “It is mutual reciprocity. I help and support my clients if they fulfil their commitments; otherwise I will not help them” (NE K)</p> <p><i>Non-Emirati clients</i> “I care to increase our profits, I do my best to fulfil my commitments to the bank and in return I expect my banker to fulfil his commitments. It is a calculative commitment” (NE 22)</p>
TRIBALISM: WASTA	
<p><i>Themes</i> Law and documentation Belief in professionalism Belief in good qualifications Corruption</p>	<p><i>Non-Emirati bankers</i> “I don’t know anything else other than the law. We are famous for this and I am not ready to destroy our good reputation and accept wasta” (NE S) “Wasta is a corruption” (NE V)</p> <p><i>Non-Emirati clients</i> “Why do I have to take the risk and look for wasta? I trust my counterpart when everything is documented, otherwise I will be worried all the time” (NE 14)</p>
CULTURAL SIMILARITY	
<p><i>Themes</i> Different language (an obstacle) Foreign language: a barrier to trust Hampers proper dialogue Importance of communication</p>	<p><i>Non-Emirati bankers</i> “Second-language English speakers often respond better if their home language is used to communicate with them, especially on things of importance” (NE L)</p> <p><i>Non-Emirati clients</i> “Language is an obstacle, especially if my Emirati counterpart can’t express his thoughts. In this situation we will not be able to understand each other” (NE 23) “Communication is important to build a satisfactory relationship. I think Emirati people like to deal with each other because of the language problem” (NE 6)</p>

Table 4: Concept Illustrations (Non-Emirati Interviewees)

