

Full Length Research Paper

The influence of market orientation on the commitment, trust and relational norms in the education context

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Organisations are forming partnerships to enhance their capabilities to improve product quality, innovation, and market research. Researchers and managers have recognized the potential synergy in a partnership regardless of the types of relationship. The main objective of this paper is to determine the influence of market orientation on the trust-commitment-relational norms model of relationship marketing in the higher education context. Specifically, the researchers are interested in determining whether the private colleges own market orientation and perception of its partner's market orientation have a positive influence on the trust, commitment and relational norms. Respondents were chosen from 65 private colleges in Malaysia. Questionnaires were distributed by enumerators hired by the researcher. Completed questionnaires were then collected by the enumerators and mailed to the researcher within three month after it was distributed. Results from this study indicate that there were significant correlations between the private colleges own market orientation with its trust, commitment and relational norms toward its partner university. In addition, organisation trust does have significant and strong influence on commitment and commitment in turn has a strong and positive relationship with relational norms. The results highlighted the importance of organisations to have a strong market orientation in order to enhance its level of trust, commitment and relational norms towards its partner. This will help increase the length and strength of the partnership.

Key words: Market orientation, private colleges, trust, commitment, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

As competition between organisations and service firms become intense, organisations discover that competing based on product, price, promotion, and place alone is inadequate. Organisations involved in offering non-consumer goods, realised that they not only have to attract customer but they also have to retain them, in order to transform them into loyal customers (Alam et al., 2010). This effort will help create a sustainable competitive advantage for the company, thus ensuring survivability.

An organisation would be creating superior competitive

advantage by providing and enhancing better relationship with their customer beyond the development of quality products, good pricing, excellent distribution and attractive promotion (Alam and Khalifa, 2009). In order to create a better relationship, the author argues that one must be a market oriented organisation. An organisation "develops a market orientation to build relevance into the products and services it offers its customers" (Farrelly and Quester, 2003a). In the effort to achieve these objectives, a market orientation culture serves as a foundation to the creation and implementation of effective competitive strategies, innovation and response.

A firms excellent performance in the market place has been contributed to strong market orientation culture. Even though this argument does not hold true in all situation, it is one of the strongest claim in marketing.

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This claim is made substantially more than other strategic orientation such as innovation and entrepreneurial orientations. However, Grinstein (2008) proposed that other type of orientation may also play a significant influence on organisational performance. He discovered that market orientation culture is strongly correlated with learning, entrepreneurial, and employee orientations and it has a moderate positive relationship with innovation orientation. Grinstein (2008) also proposed that in addition to market orientation, firms should adopt other alternative orientation such as learningm entrepreneurial, employee and innovation orientation to ensure better performance.

The foregoing discussion has motivated the researcher to further explore the relationship between strong market orientation culture with other constructs such as relational norms, trust and commitment in higher education context. Hence this paper hopes to answer several research questions as follows:

1. Does both types of market orientation (perception of own market orientation and perception of partner's market orientation) and both elements of trust (credibility and benevolence) affects the changes in the level of calculative and affective commitment shown by the private colleges towards its education partner (the public universities)?
2. Does the private colleges perceptions of its own market orientation and its partner's (the public universities) market orientation has a positive influence on their solidarity norms towards the public universities?
3. Does the private colleges perceptions of its own market orientation and its partner's (the public universities) market orientation has a positive influence on their participation norms towards the public universities?
4. Does the private colleges perceptions of its own market orientation and its partner's (the public universities) market orientation has a positive influence on their flexibility norms towards the public universities?
5. Does the private colleges perceptions of its own market orientation and its partner's (the public universities) market orientation has a positive influence on their credibility towards the public universities?
6. Does the private colleges perceptions of its own market orientation and its partner's (the public universities) market orientation has a positive influence on their benevolence towards the public universities?

TRANSFORMATION OF TRANSACTIONAL TO RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

One of the major transformations of the marketing approach is the shift from a purely transactional approach to customer relationship approach (Rich, 2000). He further argues that 'the need for relationship marketing stems from the changing dynamics of the global place

and the expanding requirements for competitive success' (Rich, 2000). This shift or in thinking is basically changing the selling orientation. An orientation of not only looking as mere customer who only purchase products or services (market oriented) but selling, satisfying and retaining them as loyal customers. Christopher et al. (2002) suggested that this approach has an objective of transforming the customers into 'client, supporter, advocate and ultimately as partners'. It is clear that the customer relationship approach is not a short run approach where a potential customer is treated base on the number of transaction per se but treating them as though they are part of 'the family'. As family members, sellers and service providers should hope to see them over the long run. The ultimate goal is not only to win their money but their heart. Therefore, to define relationship marketing, one must be able to look at the big picture. Customer must be seen as a potential partner that has long lasting 'value', instead of just an individual and beyond the business transaction. Thus, it is argued that in relationship marketing, 'the focus is on the relationship rather than the transaction' (Palmer et al., 2005).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) argue that that true relationship marketing acknowledge the fact that in many situation, relationship marketing does not have any "customer" for all type of relationship that may exist. Customers in relationships are regarded as "exchange participants". They further add that in many relationships such as 'strategic alliance between competitors, partnership between firms and government and internal marketing', the concept of 'buyer and seller' or 'customers' or 'key accounts' does not exists. They proposed that the players in relationship marketing are "partners exchanging resources".

Thus they suggested that the term relationship marketing should be defined as "Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed to establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Plewa and Quester (2007) suggested a more comprehensive definition based on previous research to describe the nature of interaction in a university-industry relationship. The definition suggested by them is stated as "Relationship marketing involves proactively identifying, creating, developing, maintaining, enhancing and, when necessary, terminating relationships that are trusting, committed and interactive in nature with selected customers (partners), in order to create a mutual value over time" (Plewa and Quester, 2007).

This definition will be the core idea through out this paper with the concentration on a university-business organisation networking relationship, namely the relationship between public universities and the private colleges. These private colleges are also given the title "associated colleges" by some public universities that form partnership with them. Hence, the word associated colleges used in this paper refers to these private colleges.

Market orientation

The value of having a market oriented focus has been argued to create a long term sustainable competitive advantage as it is implied that there is a link between being market oriented and creating better performance, and increasing profitability for the organisation. Furthermore, a market oriented organisation that is also customer oriented is focused on learning and anticipating the changing needs of the customers. This will in turn create better value and higher satisfaction for customers (Bellou, 2007; Blesa and Bigné, 2005).

Some researcher did not distinguish between organisational culture and market oriented behaviours. However, most researchers consider both elements as distinct and interrelated constructs. This is supported by the work of Hurley and Hult (1998) who argues that culture is a complex system consisting of norms and values that becomes part of the organisation. Naturally, the types and variance found in the processes and behaviours of the organisation are very much affected by this complex system. Furthermore, they argued that previous research has supported the idea that market orientation behaviour may be embedded in the culture of an organisation which in turn affects its market awareness and action.

Firms that are market oriented would be able to create sustainable competitive advantage because it is postulated that market-oriented firm is considered to have an internal strength that cannot be easily imitated by the competitor (Kasper, 2002). Furthermore, Lafferty and Hult (2001) suggested that the cultural focus of market-oriented firms goes 'beyond the specific structures and formal and informal processes within an organisation'. They argued that it relates to the "fundamental values determining the actual practices in an organisation, such as the way people behave or the way they do things in that organisation". This argument clearly highlighted that the behaviour and action of the employees are the manifestation of the organisation culture that they belong to. In addition, Grinstein (2008) argues that market orientation has a significantly strong correlation with business orientation such as learning, entrepreneurial, and employee orientations. However, it has a moderately positive relationship with innovation orientation

Much of the market orientation research in the 1990s has been credited to the work of Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli et al. (1993). The result of the investigation of the work of Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1993), has motivated Cadogan and Diamantopoulos (1995) to propose a modified version of definition of market orientation which is defined as "A modified perspective where customer orientation and competitor orientation reflect the specific focus of the behaviours associated with the *generation, dissemination and responsiveness* to market intelligence. In turn, the manner in which the latter are actually performed is reflected in the coordinating mechanism component which

steers the entire process (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995).

The outcome of MO on business performance, trust and commitment has been documented by previous scholar. Taylor et al. (2008) for example, highlighted the positive influence of both customer orientation and competitor (components of MO) on relationship commitment of salesperson in the Korean robotic industry. Similarly, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) discovered that MO culture has a positive effect on employees' esprit de corps and organizational commitment. More recently, Rodrigues and Pinho (2010) found that both internal and external market oriented would result in higher levels of employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the local context of local public sector.

Market orientation culture is also postulated to have a significant influence on inter-firm trust (Farrelly and Quester, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). They discovered that in the relationship between sponsors and professional sports team, market orientation has a positive influence on the sponsor's trust on professional sports team. Furthermore, the research conducted by Zhao and Cavusgil (2006) in USA, shows that supplier's market orientation is significantly related to manufacturer's trust, which affects the manufacturer's long-term orientation toward the supplier. Similar result was highlighted by Bigne and Blesa (2003) who point out that manufacturer's market orientation has direct effects on distributors' trust and that trust fosters the distributor's satisfaction with the relationship with the manufacturer. Thus indicating the positive effect of market orientation on trust in inter-firm relationship. In the same vein, the researcher argues that the private colleges' perception of its own market orientation and the perceived market orientation of the colleges towards the public universities is postulated to influence their trust in the relationship.

Commitment

Another important element of relationship quality is commitment. Next to trust, commitment is considered as central to relationship marketing. Wilson (2000) argues that in buyer-seller relationship, studies commitment is the most commonly used dependent variable. Furthermore, in relationship literature, commitment is considered as the manifestation of both the action and subsequent attitudes of one or several parties towards the relationship they are involved in (Stocbacka et al., 1994). Wilson (2000) also stated that committed parties imply that the relationship is important to them and portrays their desire to continue it for a substantial time.

Caceres and Papparoidamis (2007) argued that it is undeniable that 'commitment' is very critical in determining the behaviour of an organisation and may create important outcomes such as 'decreased customer turnover' and 'higher motivation'. Furthermore, the virtue of

commitment in a business relationship is highlighted in the work of Morgan and Hunt (1994). They stated that commitment shown by a partner will lead to loyalty and repeated purchase in the other partner. The relationship between commitment and these two variables are found to be positive and highly significant. In addition, they argued that since 'relationship performance' is paramount in influencing repurchase decisions in a relationship, business loyalty is seen as similar to relationship commitment.

Furthermore, commitment among partners in a relationship has been postulated to have a positive relationship with loyalty and repeat purchase and since repurchase decision is influenced by relationship performance, business loyalty is deemed to relationship commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The dimension of commitment is postulate to consist of two elements, affective and calculative commitment (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Kumar et al., 1995; Monroy and Alzola, 2005). Affective commitment is considered the psychological aspect of the commitment dimension as it is based on emotional attachment, feeling of togetherness, and a sense of belongingness. The researcher postulates that calculative commitment is based on a cost benefits analysis. Partners that evaluate their relationship based on cognitive commitment would consider the financial advantages gain if they stay in the relationships as opposed to their financial loss if they leave the relationship.

Trust

Building and cementing trust in a relational exchange is critical in almost all form of the relationship. This is due to the fact that exchange of sensitive information is vital to the formulation and implementation of objectives formulated in an alliance or partnership. Furthermore, it may also serve to reassure the partners that the association is worthwhile, and that both parties has done its up most to ensure success especially in volatile economic, social or political environment (Farrelly and Quester, 2005).

Study conducted by Friman et al. (2002) showed that trust was found to be an important factor in partner selection. Interestingly, personal liking and honesty created the foundation for trust and were considered important before engaging in more involved form of commitment.

Furthermore, the work of Rousseau et al. (1998) indicates that creating trust involves the element of risk. They argue that regardless of the research background of the researcher, the elements of surrendering of one party defence on the action that may be detrimental to the attainment of the party's objective is found in the conceptualisation of the majority of the scholars studying trust among partners in a relationship. In this respect, organisations that are willing to trust its partners are in fact is automatically willing to become vulnerable to the actions of its partner which may create relationship satisfaction

when both parties fulfils its obligations effectively and efficiently. On the other hand dissatisfaction may surface if one or both parties fail to honour the agreement or contract. The definition put forth by Rousseau et al. (1998) reflects this attitude of defining trust between partners engage in any relationships. Hence they define trust as "A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intention or behaviour of another" (Rousseau et al., 1998).

Furthermore, Paltzelt and Shepherd (2008) proposed that the element of control is added to the element of trust when dealing with underperforming alliances. Their study highlighted the contribution of goodwill trust to sustain trouble alliances. Study conducted by Sezen and Yilmaz (2007) highlighted the importance of trust in forming solidarity among automobile dealers in Turkey. They argue that trust has a positively strong influence on automobile dealer's solidarity. The virtue of trust in B2B relationship is also supported by Whipple et al. (2010) who proposed that trust would contributes to the performance and satisfaction in a collaborative relationship.

In this paper, the construct trust is measured by the degree in which the private colleges' perceives its benevolence and credibility towards its partner, the public universities (Bordonaba-Juste and Polo-Redondo, 2004; Ganesan, 1994; Siguaw et al., 1998). Benevolence is defined as the concern for the interests and welfare shown by the partners involved in the relationship in the pursuit of achieving shared goals. This is done by sacrificing one own short-term interests for the long-term survival and the benefits of the relationship. Furthermore, Ganesan (1994) suggested that 'friendship between the parties' and the 'sacrifices' made to satisfy the other party are two major components that constitute the construct of benevolence.

Credibility is defined as the belief of the participant in the relationship that the other party is 'sincere, trustworthy, keeps his word, is committed to his/her obligations' in performing the role that is required and obligated in the relationship. Thus, the credibility built by an organisation is tied to the volume or 'required level of capability or the 'skill' possessed to perform the tasks obligated by the relationship. These capabilities and skills can be termed as the reliability of the partner.

Relational norms and alliance

Organisations that enter into a relationship exchange would most probably use contractual agreements to control the behaviour of the parties involved. In other words, the "roles" and "obligations" of the parties involved are spelled out in the contract. Even though contractual agreements is useful in governing the relational exchange in inter-organisation exchange, it has been criticised as being "less flexible" and "lack of adaptive" ability that would be difficult to adhere to in highly volatile

industry. In addition, contracts that are very detailed in nature would not possess the deterrent mechanism or “general safeguard” that would discourage any partners from adopting a “self-interest-seeking” behaviour especially in situation of uncertainty and ambiguity (Cannon et al., 2000). Some contractual agreement do allow concepts such as “good faith” and “fair dealing” in their contract to cater for flexibility in respond to unforeseen circumstances. This will help the parties involved to make adjustment to existing relationship in order to “ensure continuity” in the relationship. Cannon et al. (2000) highlighted the argument of scholars that suggested that the scope of the rules specified in the contract to cater for the uncertainty and ambiguous nature of a particular relationship or to create a “general safeguards” to control self interest motivated behaviour is very limited. This scenario is attributed to barriers and limitation of the governing contract law and the practicality of the relationship.

The influence of MO culture on relational norms is postulated by previous authors. For example, Hsieh et al. (2008) suggest that for a competitor-oriented (element of MO culture), supplier would have a significant relationship with flexibility norms. Flexibility norm is considered important in relationship environment that is unstable especially in the exploration and decline phases of a relationship. For supplier that focuses more on customer-oriented culture (element of MO culture), being flexible is important in all four phases of a relationship (exploration, build-up, maturity and decline).

In addition, Siquaw (1998) propose that distributors' MO has a significant effect on its trust and perception of cooperative norms in its relation with the supplier. Langerak (2001) further postulate that a manufacturer MO has a direct positive effect on suppliers' cooperative norms. He argues that “Cooperation is proactive and reflects a belief that channel participants in a relationship must combine their efforts, or cooperate, to be successful. The description of cooperation proposed here, which is referred to as cooperative norms, reflects the belief that channel partners work jointly to achieve mutual and individual goals while avoiding opportunistic behaviors that lead to conflict”.

This conceptualisation of cooperative norms share a similar concept with solidarity and participative norms, in that, organisations in a partnership or alliances are expected to work together as a team, unselfish and does not take advantage over less influential partners. In this sense, the researcher proposed that a partner MO culture has a similar effect on both participation and solidarity norms similar to the influence of MO on cooperative norms.

THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND THE ASSOCIATED COLLEGES

The researcher postulates that the relationship created between public universities and the associated colleges

is similar to the relationship of business buyer and seller with some important exceptions. The associated colleges are technically, competitors of public universities, even though public universities are a non-profit organisation. However, once the colleges enter into alliances with public universities, the relationships ‘resemble a franchised relationship where the public universities are the franchisor and the colleges are the franchisee. In general, the colleges would provide the physical facilities and manpower while public universities would provide the syllabus, training and promotion of the courses that the colleges choose to introduce at their campuses. At the same time, some of the colleges also create alliances with other foreign and local universities by offering non competing courses. For example, an associated college may offer a hotel and catering course that are model from the hotel and catering courses offered by a public university while at the same time offering a civil engineering course that is identical to a civil engineering course offered by a foreign university.

In this respect, Hunt et al. (2006) argues that there are ten forms of relationships based on the suggestion by Morgan and Hunt (1994). The ten forms of relationships can be classified into four categories, which are, supplier partnership, lateral partnerships buyer partnerships and internal partnership. This is shown in Figure 1.

The researcher argues that the relationship between public universities and its associated colleges closely resembles the lateral partnerships or alliances between competitors as the associated colleges is the competitors for students that would otherwise apply to public universities for higher education. Never the less, once the partnerships or alliances is formed, the relationships also mirrors the relationship between a franchisor and franchisees where public universities takes the role of the franchisor and the associated colleges takes the role of a franchisee. In addition, the associated colleges may also form alliances or partnership with other universities, locally or abroad. This creates a form of network that possesses special challenges for public universities and the Colleges.

The researcher proposed that the relationship between the public universities and the associated colleges is very similar to the relationship between a franchisor and franchisee. As mentioned earlier, public universities are the franchisor and the associated colleges are the franchisee.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual model that shows the proposed variables in this paper can be observed in Figure 2. The independent variables of the model consists of two basic elements, market orientation of the private colleges and their perceived market orientation of its partner, the public universities. The independent variables of the relationship comprises of three variables, relational norms (rationalism), commitment and trust as perceived the

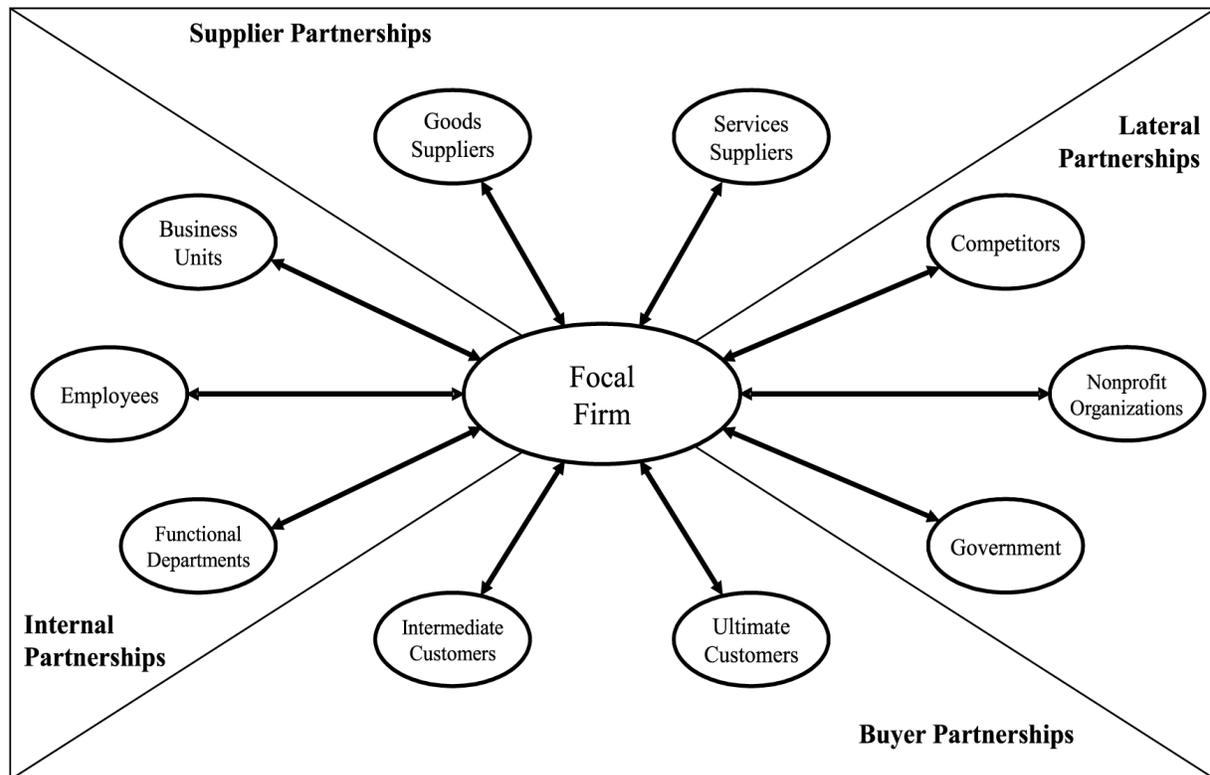


Figure 1. Ten forms and four types of relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

private colleges.

The original source of the model was adopted from the work of Farrelly and Quester (2003a, 2003b, 2005), Hausman (2001) and Plewa and Quester (2007). Researches done by Farrelly and Quester (2003a, 2003b, 2005), focuses on the sponsorship agent and principal relationship while Plewa and Quester (2007) investigated the key drivers of university and industry relationships. Hausman (2001) who studied sample of hospital material managers, who make decision concerning the purchases of medical and surgical material from major suppliers, proposed that a strong relationship with the supplier results in positive outcome. Furthermore, she postulates that a combination of factors; trust, commitment and 'relationalism' would result in better chances of successful relationship rather than depending on only one factor even though the level of contribution of each factor may vary. From these literatures, a modified theoretical framework is proposed as in Figure 2.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper addresses the perceptions of private colleges (associated colleges) on their own market orientation culture and market orientation culture of their partners; the public universities. In the context of the education alliance, the public universities are partners to the associated colleges and vice versa. This perception is further evaluated to gauge its influence on the

three variables identified in the conceptual model; relational norms, trust and commitment.

Since this paper aims to shed light on the knowledge of the effect of market orientation on several variables, the research methods chosen would answer the research questions highlighted earlier (Alam, 2011). The researchers have chosen structured questionnaires as the research tools. A pilot study was conducted to gauge the reliability of items used and they were found to meet the minimum Cronbach alpha of 0.60. All items registered a value of > 0.60.

The respondents chosen are management staff from a sample of 50 private colleges in Malaysia. These private colleges were selected from a population of 65 private colleges that has created academic collaboration with the public universities in terms of offering some academic courses that is identical to the academic courses offered by these universities. A total of five management staff was identified for each private college, which equals to a population of 325 respondents. The researcher adopted a purposive random sampling of four respondents for each private college which resulted in a sample size of 260 respondents. This sample size is considered adequate for a social science research (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). However, only 209 management staff participated in the survey. The head of department were contacted via mail, in order to get permission to distribute the questionnaires. Once permission was granted, the researcher and several enumerators went to these colleges to interview the respondents using structured questionnaire.

The questionnaires consist of eight items for organisation's own market orientation and seven items for partner's market orientation. An organisation's perception of its own orientation is divided into three elements. The first element refers to the perception of the private colleges utilisation of market research with customers, competitors and monitoring its' partners changing needs. The

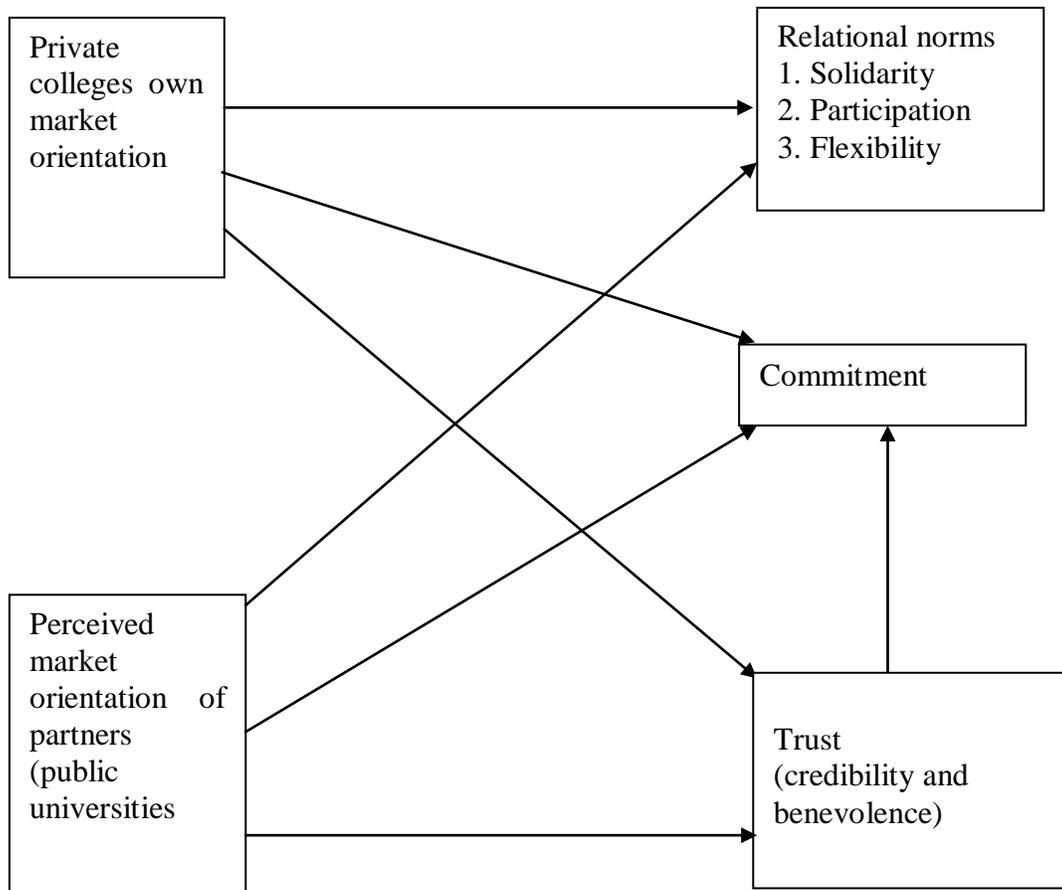


Figure 2. Proposed conceptual model (adapted from Farrelly and Quester, 2003, 2005; Hausman, 2001).

second element refers to the dissemination of important decision throughout the organisation and the third element focuses on the effort of the private colleges to satisfy the needs of customers which has an impact on its partnership with the public universities. Perception on a partner's market orientation is the perception of the private colleges on the public universities market orientation on the three elements of market orientation highlighted earlier.

There are seven items for solidarity norms. Solidarity norm is operationalised as the private colleges' attitude and action of making sacrifices, maintaining a cooperative relation, making improvement that benefits its partners (the public universities), and willingness to help solve problems faced by their partner and accepting them as business partners. In short, accepting and willingness to build a culture of accepting the public universities as part of the organisation.

The three items for participation norm refers to the practice of an organisation to consult and taking opinions and suggestion of its partner in setting goals, make decision and accomplishing tasks important to the partnership. Flexibility on the other hand consist of five items pertaining to the willingness to make adjustments during difficult situation, flexibility in adhering to contractual agreements and working out a new deal in the interest of the partnership.

The 12 items for trust is divided into two dimensions, credibility and benevolence. Credibility refers to honesty, sincerity, keeping promises, reliability in exchanging information of the private colleges and confidence in the knowledge, expertise and capabilities of the public universities (partners). Benevolence refers to elements that includes considering each other's interest in

making decisions, helping each other in making important decision, counting on each other during hard times, responding with understanding, empathy, ready and willing to offer assistance and caring for each other welfare.

Ten items in the commitment section are divided into two sections, affective and calculative commitment. Affective commitment is operationalised as having a strong sense of loyalty, continuing the partnership because of joy, having positive feelings to each other, willingness to forsake better offer in the interest of the partners and being patient with the public universities when it makes mistakes. Calculative commitment considering the partnership as a long term relationship and collaboration, expecting the renewal of contract as automatic, willingness to invest substantially to maintain and improve the relationship and continuing the relationship with its partners because of financial advantage. Both the researcher and the enumerators distributed and collected the questionnaires within a period of six months. The management staff comprises of staff with titles such as department heads, programme directors, programme coordinators and academic directors. Examples of the private colleges are Kolej UNIKOP, Kolej Teknologi Timur, Kolej Shah Putra, Kolej Teknologi BESTARI, Kolej SAL and Kolej RISDA.

RESULTS

The items in the questionnaires were tested for their reliability based on the main constructs. Cronbach's alpha

was used in the analysis and all items had a value of > 0.600 . This indicates that the items used was able to measure the construct effectively

A preliminary correlation analysis was performed in order to determine the strength and direction of the variables as a basis for conducting a regression analysis. Several interesting results have emerged. The private colleges' perception of its own market orientation (own MO) culture was discovered to have a positive relationship with participation norms, flexibility norms, trust and commitment. This is also true for the private colleges' perception of its partner's (public universities) market orientation (partner MO) culture. In other words, the three elements of relational norms (solidarity, participation and flexibility norms), trust and commitment of the private colleges are influenced by its own market orientation culture and their perception of the public universities' market orientation culture who are their partners in the alliance. In addition, all relationship has a correlation coefficient between 0.502 and 0.718 indicating moderate to strong relationship between both types of market orientation culture with commitment, trust and all three elements of relational norms. Furthermore, the private colleges' own market orientation culture has a higher correlation coefficients value compared to its perception of the public universities market orientation culture. Results of the correlation analysis also indicate a strong and positive association between the commitment shown by the private colleges and their trust towards the public universities. From these results, the researchers conclude that a regression analysis would possibly produce a good result. All correlation analysis is shown in Table 1.

Regression analysis

In order to answer the research questions, several regression analyses were conducted.

1. Results of the mean calculative commitment is influenced by one element of trust, benevolence and its own perception of market orientation. The R squared value of 0.500 indicates that 50% level of calculative commitment shown by the private higher learning organisation is influenced by the one element of trust; benevolence and one element of market orientation, the private colleges' perception of its own market orientation. In this respect, part of research question 1 is answered. Hence, the private colleges' calculative commitment is influenced only by the private colleges' own market orientation and its benevolence. Tables 2 and 3 reveal both the figures for the regression model and coefficients analysis for calculative commitment.

2. The second regression analysis, mean affective commitment is influenced by benevolence, credibility and perception of its partner market orientation. Value of the R squared (0.679) indicates that 67.9% of the private higher learning institutions (HLI) affective commitment are affected by both elements of trust, that is,

benevolence and credibility, and the private HLI's perception of its partner's market orientation. Therefore, part of research question 1 is answered which means the affective commitment shown by the private colleges are influenced by both elements of trust and the colleges' perception of the public universities' market orientation. Tables 4 and 5 show the regression model, and coefficient analysis for the variable, affective commitment.

Relational norms

The next set of regression analysis was conducted in order to identify whether the private HLIs perception of its own market orientation and its partner's market orientation, may influence the three elements of relational norms; solidarity, participation and flexibility norms. Table 6 to 11 highlights figures for all model for the regression and the coefficients analysis for all three types of relational norms.

In terms of the elements of relational norms, changes in the private HLI's solidarity are influenced by the private HLIs perceptions of its own market orientation and its' partners' market orientation. This means that the combination of both element of market orientation influences the level of change in the solidarity norms of the private HLIs. However, only 52.5% of the changes in solidarity norm are affected by both element of market orientation as indicated by the R squared value of 0.525. All these results confirm that both elements of market orientation are influential in determining the private colleges' solidarity norms, thus answering the second research question.

As for the participation norms displayed by the private higher learning institutions, it was discovered that the norm is influenced by the private colleges' MO culture and partners' MO culture with an R Squared value of 0.474. This means, that only 47.4% of the changes in participation norms are affected by both element of market orientation.

The combination of both element of market orientation influences the level of participation norms among the private colleges', hence answering the third research question.

Flexibility is influenced by mean own MO and partners MO (R square 0.465). The same phenomenon is observed in the flexibility experienced by the private higher learning institutions.

The regression analysis revealed that 46.5% changes in the private HLIs' flexibility is influenced by both its perception of its own market orientation on its partner market orientation. Thus this result answers the fourth research question.

Trust and market orientation

Two elements of trust, credibility and benevolence, are proposed in this paper. Result of the regression analysis

Table 1. Correlation analysis of variables.

S/No.	Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Mean own MO	Pearson correlation	1.000						
		Sig. (2-tailed)							
		N	209						
2	Mean partner MO	Pearson correlation	0.660**	1.000					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000						
		N	209	209					
3	Mean solidarity	Pearson correlation	0.603**	0.564**	1.000				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000					
		N	209	209	209				
4	Mean participation	Pearson correlation	0.718**	0.677**	0.747**	1.000			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000				
		N	209	209	209	209			
5	Mean flexibility	Pearson correlation	0.645**	0.580**	0.742**	0.820**	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000			
		N	209	209	209	209	209		
6	Mean trust	Pearson correlation	0.610**	0.502**	0.712**	0.732**	0.741**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		N	209	209	209	209	209	209	
7	Mean commitment	Pearson correlation	0.555**	0.534**	0.788**	0.739**	0.759**	0.778**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
		N	209	209	209	209	209	209	209

*** $p < 0.01$.

reveals that both elements of trust are influenced by at least one element of market orientation. The element of trust, credibility, is influenced only by the perceptions of the private institutions' own market orientation. However, the R squared value equals 0.270. The regression analysis reveals that only 27% of the changes in the credibility of the private higher learning institutions are influenced by the private institutions' perceptions of its own market orientation. Based on this result, the researchers postulate that only the private colleges' perception of its MO influences its credibility, thus answering part of the research question. All results are shown in Tables 12 and 13.

The next regression analysis was conducted to determine the nature of relationship between the second element of trust, benevolence and the two elements of market orientation as perceived by the private higher learning institutions. Results of the regression analysis revealed that the element of trust; benevolence is influenced by both element of market orientation; the private HLI's perceptions of its own MO and its partner's

MO. The R square value of 0.352 indicates that 35.2% of the changes in the institution's benevolence are affected by both element of the market orientation as perceived by the private HLI's. Based on this result, both types of MO influence the private colleges' level of benevolence, hence answering the sixth research question. All results of the regression model and the coefficients analysis for the trust variable; benevolence, are shown in Tables 14 and 15.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The conceptual framework postulates that an organisation's market orientation and their perceptions of their partner's market orientation have an association with the organisation's trust, commitment and relational norms. These results contradicts the work of Farrelly and Quester (2003a, 2003b) that suggested that an organisation commitment is not influenced by the perception of it's partners market orientation. The researchers proposed that the constant communication and contact has

Table 2. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Calculative commitment.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.691 ^a	0.478	0.475	0.76431	0.478	187.487	1	205	0.000
	2	0.707 ^b	0.500	0.495	0.74936	0.023	9.258	1	204	0.003

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean Benevolence; ^bPredictors: (Constant), Mean Benevolence, Mean Own MO.

Table 3. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Calculative commitment.

Types of Institution	Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Private HLI	1	Constant	1.480	0.286		5.177	0.000	1.000	1.000
		Mean benevolence	0.740	0.054	0.691	13.693	0.000		
	2	Constant	1.167	0.299		3.907	0.000	0.680	1.470
		Mean benevolence	0.629	0.064	0.588	9.798	0.000		
		Mean own MO	0.187	0.061	0.183	3.043	0.003		

^aDependent variable: Mean cal commit.

Table 4. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Affective commitment.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.785 ^a	0.615	0.614	0.62446	0.615	328.117	1	205	0.000
	2	0.810 ^d	0.656	0.653	0.59194	0.041	24.142	1	204	0.000
	3	0.824 ^e	0.679	0.675	0.57305	0.023	14.671	1	203	0.000

^aPredictors: (constant), Mean benevolence; ^dPredictors: (constant), Mean benevolence, Mean credibility; ^ePredictors: (constant), Mean benevolence, Mean credibility, Mean partners MO.

has enabled the private colleges to gauge the level of market orientation of their partners, that is, the public universities. As for the postulated relationship between the organisation’s trust and

its commitment, results of the correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between trust and commitment. Even though the risk of education collaboration may be lower than

other business collaboration, forming alliances with an education partner are more attractive if there is knowledge that the other party will not take advantage of the vulnerability associated with

Table 5. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Affective commitment.

Types of institution	Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
			B	Standard error	Beta		
Private HLI	1	Constant	1.152	0.234		4.932	0.000
		Mean benevolence	0.800	0.044	0.785	18.114	0.000
	2	Constant	0.849	0.230		3.696	0.000
		Mean benevolence	0.521	0.071	0.511	7.382	0.000
		Mean credibility	0.324	0.066	0.340	4.913	0.000
	3	Constant	0.480	0.242		1.981	0.049
		Mean benevolence	0.427	0.072	0.419	5.898	0.000
		Mean partners MO	0.188	0.049	0.179	3.830	0.000
		Mean credibility	0.320	0.064	0.336	5.023	0.000

^aDependent variable: Mean affective commitment.

Table 6. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Solidarity norms.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.680 ^a	0.462	0.460	0.71205	0.462	176.346	1	205	0.000
	2	0.724 ^b	0.525	0.520	0.67125	0.062	26.681	1	204	0.000

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO; b. predictors: (Constant), Mean Own MO, Mean partners MO.

Table 7. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Solidarity norms.

Types of institution	Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
			B	Standard error	Beta		
Private HLI	1	Constant	2.033	0.234		8.686	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.638	0.048	0.680	13.280	0.000
	2	Constant	1.490	0.244		6.096	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.405	0.064	0.432	6.338	0.000
		Mean partners MO	0.356	0.069	0.352	5.165	0.000

^aDependent variable: Mean solidarity.

Table 8. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Participation norms.

Types of institution	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.645 ^a	0.416	0.414	0.77957	0.416	146.313	1	205	0.000
	2	0.688 ^b	0.474	0.469	0.74205	0.057	22.258	1	204	0.000

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO; ^bPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO, Mean partners MO.

Table 9. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Participation norms.

Types of institution	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance	
		B	Standard error	Beta			
Private HLI	1	Constant	1.793	0.256	6.999	0.000	
		Mean own MO	0.636	0.053	0.645	12.096	0.000
	2	Constant	1.245	0.270	4.608	0.000	
		Mean own MO	0.401	0.071	0.407	5.676	0.000
		Mean partners MO	0.359	0.076	0.338	4.718	0.000

^aDependent variable: Mean participation.

Table 10. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Flexibility norms.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R Square change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.660 ^a	0.435	0.433	0.72710	0.435	158.005	1	205	0.000
	2	0.682 ^b	0.465	0.460	0.70949	0.030	11.306	1	204	0.001

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean Own MO; ^bPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO, Mean partners MO.

investing in such a relationship. These findings supports the results of several authors that advocate the trust-commitment relationship (Bordonaba-Juste and Polo-Redondo, 2004; Farrelly and Quester, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b; Ulaga and Eggert, 2004).

In comparing the relationship strength between variables, no r value less than 0.5 was revealed in

the correlation analysis. Hence, no weak relation between variables was observed. The lowest r value is registered as 0.502 and the highest r value is shown as 0.820. The lowest r value is registered between mean trusts with mean score of the private colleges' perception of its partner (public universities) MO culture. On the contrary, the highest r value is shown in the relationship

between the private colleges' flexibility norm and its participation norm. In fact, there is a mixture of moderately strong and strong relation between variables.

The variable trust has a strong relationship with all three elements of relational norms, participation, flexibility and solidarity norms indicated by the r values greater than 0.70. Similarly,

Table 11. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Flexibility norms.

Types of Institution	Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Standard error	Beta		
Private HLI	1	(Constant)	2.003	0.239		8.380	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.617	0.049	0.660	12.570	0.000
	2	(Constant)	1.629	0.258		6.306	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.456	0.068	0.488	6.756	0.000
		Mean partners MO	0.245	0.073	0.243	3.363	0.001

^aDependent Variable: Mean flexibility.

Table 12. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Credibility.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.520 ^a	0.270	0.267	0.90410	0.270	75.898	1	205	0.000

^aPredictors: (Constant), mean own MO; ^bDependent variable: Mean credibility.

Table 13. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Credibility.

Types of Institution	Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Standard error	Beta		
Private HLI	1	(Constant)	2.889	0.297		9.721	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.531	0.061	0.520	8.712	0.000

^aDependent variable: Mean credibility.

Table 14. Model summary of regression analysis for dependent variable: Benevolence.

Types of institution	Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
						R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
Private HLI	1	0.565 ^a	0.320	0.316	0.81496	0.320	96.359	1	205	0.000
	2	0.593 ^b	0.352	0.346	0.79733	0.032	10.167	1	204	0.002

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO; ^bPredictors: (Constant), Mean own MO, Mean partners MO.

Table 15. Coefficients analysis for dependent variable: Benevolence.

Types of institution	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance	
		B	Standard error	Beta			
Private HLI	1	(Constant)	2.630	0.268		9.820	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.540	0.055	0.565	9.816	0.000
	2	(Constant)	2.232	0.290		7.689	0.000
		Mean own MO	0.369	0.076	0.387	4.860	0.000
		Mean partners MO	0.261	0.082	0.254	3.189	0.002

^aDependent variable: Mean benevolence.

commitment shown by the private colleges also has a strong relationship with its trust, participation, flexibility, and solidarity norms. A moderately strong relationship is however observed between the private colleges' perception of its own market orientation culture with all the variables ($r < 0.70$) except with participation norms. Furthermore, the association between the private colleges perception of its partner (public universities) with all variables is moderately strong. These results point out that having strong and positive relational norms are very important in building high level of trust and commitment among participant in an education alliance. Both dimensions of market orientation culture have a moderate association with trust, commitment and the three elements of relational norms highlighting the relatively weaker relation of market orientation on these variables. This may be contributed to the challenges in determining the level of market orientation culture of partners in the alliance. Therefore, the researcher argues that organisations forming alliances in higher education context should focus more on building stronger relational norms followed by good market orientation culture.

Based on the regression analysis, it was clear that market orientation significantly and positively

influences the two elements of commitment (affective and calculative) and the two elements of trust (credibility and benevolence). Changes in both types of commitment were also found to be influenced by at least one element of trust. In addition, the changes in the three relational norms are also influenced by the changes in the two elements of market orientation. However, the combination of predictors and dependent variables are varied. For instance, the dependent variable calculative commitment is influenced by the changes in one element of trust, benevolence and only the private HLI's perception of its own market orientation. The dependent variable, affective commitment is influenced by the perception of partners' own market orientation and both elements of trust (benevolence and credibility). This result is similar to the research done by Elg (2008) and Grunert et al. (2010) who suggested the relationship between the adoption of market orientation with trust and commitment in a business network context and in international dyad relationship respectively.

However, Grunert et al. (2010) suggested that commitment and trust in B2B relationship, facilitates organisations to practice higher level of market orientation. Their result also points out that

this trend is true in highly competitive distribution chain even though the product is generic.

The researchers also discovered that the changes in all dependent variable; commitment, trust and relational norms is influenced by different level of changes in the predictors variable. The strongest association was displayed between the three predictors (benevolence, credibility and partner's market orientation) and the dependent variable affective commitment as indicated by the R squared value of 0.679. On the contrary, the weakest association was shown by the association between the predictor, perception of its own market orientation and the dependent variable credibility. Never the less, this finding supports the study of Zhao et al. (2006), who discovered the influence of channel members' market orientation on the trust level of its channel partner. In their study, a supplier who is perceived as being market oriented, is consider to be highly credible and benevolent by manufacturer who is their channel partner. The different set of combination signals the need for decision makers in an education alliance to be more aware and flexible. in determining the right combination of market orientation elements in influencing the organisation trust, commitment and relational norms in

different situation and context.

In summary, decision makers of education alliance should advocate market orientation behaviours in their organisation. Practising high level of market orientation would help increase trust, commitment and relational norms in their relationship with the public universities. Moreover, Homburg and Pflesser (2000) suggested that the establishment of market-oriented norms will not produce market-oriented behaviors unless artifacts, such as stories, rituals and language, support these norms. In terms of relational norms, both element of market orientation has the strongest influence on Solidarity norm. This finding highlighted the importance of practicing high market orientation in order to increase the strength of teamwork, unity and solidarity in the alliance with the public universities. The private colleges and the public universities are organisation with different organisation culture, management style and objectives. Thus, having a strong solidarity is critical in ensuring long-term survival of the alliance. In addition, the combination of trust and market orientation has a greater impact on commitment than the influence of market orientation on its own. Similar to previous studies (Gil-Saura et al 2009; Hausman and Johnston, 2010), this finding stresses the critical development of both benevolence and credibility in maintaining and increasing the element of commitment between the private colleges and the public universities. High commitment will in turn help sustain the relationship in the long run.

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