

Network Structure Dimension Factors In Event Management in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper determines the factors used to measure network structure dimension in event management. In order to achieve this objective, the study adopted and modified scales from previous research. This study increases understanding of network structure of minor event management ventures (EMVs) and contributes significantly to literature on entrepreneurship by providing knowledge about network structure dimension, crucial in network relationships. Evidently, by utilizing network relationships, an EMV can obtain access to vital resources, capabilities and information missing in the firm. Two hundred and seventy one entrepreneurs of event management ventures formed the sample for the study which employed descriptive research design. Census sampling was used where all the entrepreneurs in Kisumu, Nairobi and Uasin Gishu counties in Kenya were included. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The study successfully developed and tested the validity and reliability of the indicators of network structure which future researchers of entrepreneurship can adopt. Results of exploratory factor analysis modified constructs for network structure wherein generic constructs were developed. The results showed that new factors can be used to measure network structure hence, the study concluded that strong partners, weak partners, resource-based partners and ethnic partners are key in measuring network structure. Therefore as entrepreneurs attempt to develop relationships, it is necessary that they have all the factors in the network structure in order to achieve a fruitful outcome.

Keywords: event management, Kenya, network structure, strong ties, weak ties.

INTRODUCTION

Event ventures are said to be inherently unstable business units (Inkpen and Beamish 1997) because of the multi-parent situation and the intercultural interactions required in their operations to organize the activities of the ventures. The network structures are expected to be stable but not static: they will constantly change in response to changes external and internal to the network (Easton, 1992). To stabilize the business unit and its operations it is relied on relationship development to other actors in the market. Simultaneously the interaction processes in relationships lead to incessant change in networks (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995).

A network structure consists of multiple actors where one actor is connected to other. Network structure is the pattern of relationships that are created from network contacts and where differential network positions have a crucial effect on the resource flow affecting entrepreneurial endeavours (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003). Thus, if a venture has a network

structure and engages in networking it would be in a better position for finding social capital, and achieving access to important strategic information critical to the success of its commercialization (Mazzarol and Reboud, 2006). Network structures in this study are patterns of relationships created from network contacts and as observed by Hoang and Antonci (2003) have a crucial effect on the resource flow within entrepreneurial endeavours.

Concept of Network Structure

Network structure is all of a venture's relationships and the content of those ties (the strength and trust within each tie). A network organizational structure is more complicated and complex than any other structure because it consists of multiple organizations that work together to produce goods or provide services (Granovetter, 1985). A network structure should reflect the appropriate culture the company is trying to instill in their workplace; this is crucial in a network structure because organizations are accountable for the business ethics of all partners

in their supply chain (Smelser and Baltes, 2001). The primary function of a network structure is to complement and support the business strategy used to accomplish the objectives and goals of the organization. Network organizational structures are flexible and highly efficient because of the selection and use of the best partners available that provide specific needs.

A network structure often consists of multiple actors where a certain actor is connected to certain other actors (Mazzarol and Reboud, 2006). According to Burt (1992), these actors share trust, are obligated to support each other, and are dependent of exchange with each other. The competitive advantage in a network structure is thus how it is constructed and the position of the actor's contacts in the social construction. Here the amount of interaction between the contacts resources and the venture's own resources, as well as the variation in this interaction, is of importance.

Strong Ties

Strong ties are very valuable for the individual, not because they can lead to a high level of goal fulfillment but because of the person it involves (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties can be relationships between close friends and family. They create a sense of belonging to a group whose group needs are more important than the individual itself and sharing depends on these needs. The stronger the tie between two individuals, the larger is the amount of weak and strong ties among people in their network to which they will both be tied (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties are more frequent contacts based on trust (Krackhardt, 1992), facilitating the partners to share crucial and confidential information (Nicolaou and Birley, 2003b), which is critical for a venture to be established. Strong ties are frequent, emotionally intense ties with friends, advisors and co-workers. The information possessed by any member of this circle is likely to be quickly shared with the other members, being thus redundant with the information possessed by the other members. Strong ties can be defined as the relationship between an individual and his kinship, close friends, and family (Granovetter, 1982). Interaction with strong ties gives people a stronger relation to the others (White and Houseman, 2002).

The linkage is strong and they always get connected with each other. Granovetter (1982) mentioned that strong ties show some key characteristics between the parties of the relationship, such as frequent interaction, extended history, intimacy and sharing, reciprocity in exchanges that allow for mutual confiding, and trust-based interactions. Strong ties facilitate the flow of richer, detailed, and redundant information and knowledge resources between individuals and their respective groups.

Weak Ties

Weak ties are less clustered and better described as long term relationships, where the relationship is more instrumental than personal (Smelser and Baltes, 2001). The weak ties are more focused on goal fulfillment for both parties. Strong ties were once weak and the weak ties are therefore also important connections. Day-to-day interactions between an individual and the company, which the individual makes business with, are typically a part of the individual's network of weak ties (Varey, 2002). Granovetter (2004) further shows the importance of weak ties between relationships since the tie to another clique, even though it may be weak, can enable opportunities which a clique of closer relationships might not. New information is more likely to derive from weak ties where the network relationship is not well known and contact between them is infrequent. Kim and Aldrich (2005), however, argue that employing only weak ties network mode severely limits a venture's networking prospects. Besides developing and using weak ties, ventures could obtain competitive advantage by achieving access to a wider network through the frequent relationships they already have. Rather than being limited to a small set of strong ties, a venture can gain new, and sometimes indirect, contacts through their frequent partners' networks, which is a central reason for entrepreneurship researchers' great interest in the concept of social networks (Kim and Aldrich, 2005). Weak ties are different compared to personal relationships (Varey, 2002).

Weak ties offer a satisfying approach to the study of integration in networks of face-to-face interaction consisting of multiple subgroups (Noah, 1980). In many cases, weak ties have a special role in a person's opportunity for mobility; there is a structural tendency for those to whom one is only weakly tied to have better access to job information one does not already have (Granovetter, 1982). Weak ties also refer to acquaintances and friends who, as compared to close friends, are more likely to move in different circles. Granovetter (1982) argues that weak ties are crucial whenever information is diffused through social interaction because these ties provide bridges between densely knit clusters of social structures. Weak ties are infrequent, not emotionally intense, and restricted to one narrow type of relationship. Granovetter (1973) found that weak ties were more likely than strong ties to have been the source of information.

Trust

Trust is very important in networking and hence ethnic affiliation could be a basis that forms trust between entrepreneurs. Trust develops dependability in a network of personal relationship because of the transaction that occurs (Welter and Kautonen, 2005). Trust must be build up over time through continuous

achieving each others' expectations and investments in the relationship (Carayannis and Juneau, 2003). The economic exchange of a relationship is based on the level of trust between the parties involved (Dibben, 2000). Trust is essential for entrepreneurs when building relationships to potential partners (Green, 2006). Trust is what connects parties of a relationship and lack of trust destroys a relationship (Smith, 2008). Relationships based on trust foster dedication according to Berry (1999). According to O'Hara (2004), trust and solidarity described the relationships between individuals and between organizations. According to Durkheim (1964), trust is developed from shared commitments and social norms of moral behavior (Wittgenstein, 1953). The main source of trust is repetitive maintenance in relationships. The personal knowledge of the people connected to you, the ones who are interlocked with you, develops trust (O'Hara, 2004). Durkheim (1964) argued for the importance of social solidarity and that people should hold common values to obtain trust. According to Weber (1968), trust is established on mutual interest and interdependence.

Entrepreneurs from the same ethnic group get easier access to business networks in the enclave than with outsiders. They are in an advantageous position to exploit ethnic networks. Those that are established in ethnic networks can do best (Salaff *et al.*, 2003). Ethnic affiliation especially in Kenya has become a factor that can enhance or prevent relationships. Therefore, this study sought to establish factors that can be used to measure network structure dimension of networking.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted an exploratory descriptive survey design and targeted minor EMVs that engage in activities such as outside catering, decorations, event planning, banqueting and conferencing, confectionary and hire of grounds, equipment, furniture, tents and public address systems. Two hundred and seventy one entrepreneurs participated in this study. Census sampling was undertaken to select the respective respondents from Kisumu, Nairobi and Uasin Gishu counties in Kenya. Structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Cronbach's Alpha at 0.7 was used to test reliability of the instruments. Normality of the data was tested using skewness and kurtosis. Exploratory factor analysis was used to establish possible underlying factors of the network structure dimension. Descriptive statistics specifically frequencies, mean, standard deviation and variance were used to present the analyzed data.

Measurements of Network Structure

Network structure (NS) was measured using 17 items developed by Teng (2007) and modified for the study. The indicators were categorized as type of partners, resources possessed by the partners, strength

of the ties and trust between partners as described below:

- *Type of partners*: We work with relatives; We work with friends; we have links with institutions; Ventures we work with comprise service providers from different ethnic affiliations
- *Resources possessed by partners*: Resources flow within the network; The socio-economic status of service providers are different; The collaboration is open to new service providers
- *Strength of the ties*: There is frequent face-to-face contact with relatives; There is frequent face-to-face contact with friends; There is frequent communication with relatives; There is frequent communication with friends; Service providers (SPs) communicate with us accurately about business environment; Service providers communicate with us in a timely way about status of business
- *Trust between partners*: There is a high level of interconnection between service providers; There is networking amongst service providers; There are well-built relationships between service providers; There is a commitment to matters concerning service providers

RESULTS

Respondents indicated the frequency with which they established and maintained links with other ventures. A 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Few Times, 4=Often, to 5=Always was used to elicit the responses. Chi square (χ^2) tests performed on each of the indicators of network structure were all significant at 1% level with $p=0.001$ showing that there is strong evidence of the existence of relationship ties such as strong partners, weak partners, resource-based partners and ethnic partners within the networks of event management ventures. The means of the indicators in question showed tendency towards the existing of ties between and among service providers of event management ventures. The values of the skewness and kurtosis portray a normally distributed data.

The mean response rate presented in table 1 indicated that within the network structure, entrepreneurs felt that very often ventures comprise of service providers (SPs) from different ethnic affiliations ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.023$), there are well-built relationships between service providers ($M=3.72$, $SD=0.975$), there is networking amongst service providers ($M=3.70$, $SD=0.961$), socio-economic status of service providers are different ($M=3.69$, $SD=0.969$), ventures have high level of interconnection between service providers ($M=3.67$, $SD=1.126$), resources flow within the network ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.037$) and that the collaboration is open to new service providers ($M=3.56$, $SD=1.020$). On the other hand, entrepreneurs indicated that moderately service

providers communicate with other service providers accurately about business environment (M=3.45, SD=1.087), ventures have links with institutions (M=3.44, SD=1.136), service providers communicate with each other in a timely way about status of business (M=3.38, SD=1.085), ventures work with friends (M=3.36, SD=1.110), there is commitment to matters concerning service providers (M=3.43, SD=1.062), ventures have communication with

friends (M=3.40, SD=1.077) and ventures have frequent face to face contact with friends (M=3.21, SD=1.104). Additionally, entrepreneurs indicated that their ventures rarely had frequent communication with relatives (M=2.99, SD=1.180), had face to face contact with relatives (M=2.90, SD=1.150) and worked with relatives (M=2.87, SD=1.189).

Table 1: Indicators of Network Structure

	MEASUREMENT										STATISTICS					
	1		2		3		4		5					SKEW	KURT	Df=4 p=.001
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	M	SD	VAR	SE=.148	SE=.295	χ ²
C1: ventures work with relatives	26	9.6	108	39.9	35	12.9	78	28.8	24	8.9	2.87	1.189	1.414	.218	-1.141	102.155
C2: ventures work with friends	10	3.7	70	25.8	38	14.0	118	43.5	35	12.9	3.36	1.110	1.232	-.343	-.977	127.395
C3: ventures have links with institutions	12	4.4	64	23.6	30	11.1	124	45.8	41	15.1	3.44	1.136	1.291	-.472	-.868	138.539
C4: ventures have face to face contact with relatives	20	7.4	114	42.1	31	11.4	86	31.7	20	7.4	2.90	1.150	1.323	.204	-1.191	137.727
C5: ventures have frequent face to face contact with friends	9	3.3	89	32.8	35	12.9	112	41.3	26	9.6	3.21	1.104	1.219	-.142	-1.207	143.151
C6: ventures have frequent communication with relatives	18	6.6	107	39.5	33	12.2	88	32.5	25	9.2	2.99	1.180	1.393	.164	-1.147	197.642
C7: ventures have communication with friends	7	2.6	71	26.2	31	11.4	130	48.0	32	11.8	3.40	1.077	1.160	-.408	-.969	171.343
C8: ventures have high level of interconnection between SPs	8	3.0	46	17.0	45	16.6	101	37.3	71	26.2	3.67	1.126	1.267	-.542	-.687	87.801
C9: socio-economic status of service providers are different	6	2.2	31	11.4	52	19.2	133	49.1	49	18.1	3.69	.969	.939	-.706	.087	167.948
C10: there is networking amongst service providers	6	2.2	33	12.2	43	15.9	144	53.1	45	16.6	3.70	.961	.923	-.801	.223	203.815
C11: there are well-built relationships between SPs	9	3.3	26	9.6	45	16.6	143	52.8	48	17.7	3.72	.975	.951	-.910	.576	200.125
C12: resources flow within the network	9	3.3	39	14.4	48	17.7	128	47.2	47	17.3	3.61	1.037	1.076	-.665	-.209	144.111
C13: SPs communicate to us accurately about business environment	15	5.5	48	17.7	40	14.8	135	49.8	33	12.2	3.45	1.087	1.182	-.665	-.430	161.528
C14: SPs communicate with us in a timely way about status of business	13	4.8	58	21.4	42	15.5	128	47.2	30	11.1	3.38	1.085	1.178	-.512	-.697	145.624
C15: there is commitment to matters concerning SPs	11	4.1	52	19.2	51	18.8	123	45.4	34	12.5	3.43	1.062	1.128	-.502	-.582	129.572
C16: the collaboration is open to new service providers	6	2.2	48	17.7	47	17.3	129	47.6	41	15.1	3.56	1.020	1.040	-.546	-.493	150.974
C17: ventures comprise of SPs from different ethnic affiliations	8	3.0	29	10.7	43	15.9	126	46.5	65	24.0	3.78	1.023	1.047	-.819	.171	150.679

Note: N=271; 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often and 5=Always

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was performed. A Principle Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted to identify the constructs represented in the original variables. As noted by Hair *et al.*, (1998), when a large set of variables is factored, the method first extracts the combinations of variables explaining the greatest amount of variance, and then proceeds to combinations that account for small amounts of variance. From a total of seventeen items, four components namely strong partners (STP), weak partners (WEP), resource-based

partners (RBP) and ethnic partners (ETP) were extracted and explained a total of 67.46% of the variance in the data as shown on table 2. STP explained a total of 31.63% of the variance in the data and had a total of 5.377 Eigen values. WEP explained a total of 21.84% of the variance in the data with a total Eigen value of 3.713. RBP explained a total of 7.64% of the variance in the data and had a total of 1.299 eigen values. ETP explained a total of 6.35% of the variance in the data and had an Eigen value of 1.080.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1 STP	5.377	31.628	31.628	4.060	23.884	23.884
2 WEP	3.713	21.840	53.469	3.712	21.836	45.720
3 RBP	1.299	7.639	61.108	2.139	12.585	58.305
4 ETP	1.080	6.354	67.463	1.557	9.158	67.463

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Factor Loadings

Strong partners loaded six items namely ventures have face to face contact with relatives; ventures have frequent communication with relatives; ventures have frequent face to face contact with friends; ventures work with relatives; ventures work with friends; and

ventures have communication with friends loaded highly on this factor. Weak partners items that loaded highly were: Service providers communicate in a timely way; service providers communicate accurately about business environment; there is commitment to matters concerning service providers, the collaboration is open to new service providers and resources flow within the network. Resource based partners comprised three items namely socio-economic status of service providers are different; there is networking amongst service providers; and there are well built relationships between service providers, Ethnic partners comprised of only one item namely ventures comprise of service providers from different ethnic affiliations. Table 3 shows the rotated factor loadings of Network Structure dimension.

Table 3: Rotated Factor loadings

	Component			
	Strong partners	Weak partners	Resource-based partners	Ethnic partners
C4: ventures have face to face contact with relatives	.871			
C6: ventures have frequent communication with relatives	.846			
C5: ventures have frequent face to face contact with friends	.796			
C1: ventures work with relatives	.776			
C2: ventures work with friends	.740			
C7: ventures have communication with friends	.683			
C3: ventures have links with institutions				
C14: SPs communicate with us in a timely way about status of business		.880		
C13: SPs communicate to us accurately about business environment		.809		
C15: there is commitment to matters concerning service providers		.780		
C16: the collaboration is open to new service providers		.702		
C12: resources flow within the network		.612		
C9: socio-economic status of service providers are different			.789	
C10: there is networking amongst service providers			.680	
C11: there are well-built relationships between service providers			.614	
C17: ventures comprise of service providers from different ethnic affiliations				.705

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: Field Data, 2011

Construct Reliability

As shown on table 4, the reliability of factor 1, strong partners (STP) was tested by considering the coefficient of six items (C4, C6, C5, C1, C2, C7) which loaded to a significant extent on this factor which was considered a reliable measuring instrument for the construct as supported by the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.888. Factor 2, weak partners (WEP), loaded five items (C14, C13, C15, C16, C12) to a significant extent which had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.874. Factor 3,

resource-based partners (RBP), loaded three items (C9, C10, C11) which had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.786. Factor 4, ethnic partners (ETP) loaded only one item (C17) to a significant extent. Consequently its reliability coefficient was adjusted to be 1.00. In addition, for all the four factors, the item-to-total correlations were high indicating high internal consistency of the instrument hence, a reliable measurement instrument for NS.

Table 4: Construct Reliability for indicators of Network Structure

Factor 1: Strong Partners (STP), Eigen Value: 5.377, Cronbach's alpha: 0.888		
ITEM	Factor Loading	Item Total correlations
C4: There is frequent face to face contact with relatives	0.871	0.862
C6: There is frequent communication with relatives	0.846	0.860
C5: There is frequent face-to-face contact with friends	0.796	0.814
C1: We work with relatives	0.776	0.769
C2: We work with friends	0.740	0.761
C7: There is frequent communication with friends.	0.683	0.734
Factor 2: Weak Partners, Eigen value: 3.713, Cronbach's alpha: 0.874		
C14: SPs timely communicate with us about status of business	0.880	0.856
C13: SPs communicate accurately about business environment.	0.809	0.859
C15: There is a commitment to matters concerning service providers	0.780	0.828
C16: The collaboration is open to new service providers	0.702	0.762
C12: Resources flow within the network	0.612	0.766
Factor 3: Resource-Based Partners (RBP), Eigen value: 1.299, Cronbach's alpha: 0.786		
C9: The socio – economic status of service providers are different	0.789	0.695
C10: There is networking amongst service providers	0.680	0.842
C11: There are well-built relationships between service providers	0.614	0.813
Factor 4: Ethnic Partners (ETP), Eigen value: 4.519, Cronbach's alpha: 0.831		
C12: Our network comprises members from different ethnic affiliations	0.763	0.831

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was a cross-sectional examination of one hospitality sector. As such, the reported results may be limited in their applicability to other industry sectors. Another limitation of the study was that the sample population of the study consisted of residents residing in preselected cities within preselected counties of Kenya based on the assumption that most EMVs are established in cities. It is possible that if the study was conducted on other residents of other counties including rural settings, the magnitude and direction of the factors of network structure might be different. In particular network structures are known to be more pronounced in rural settings as opposed to urban settings thus, including many EMVs in other settings may therefore have helped better understanding the dimensions of network structure.

CONCLUSION

This study found contrasting sub-dimensions of network structure to comprise different types of partners such as strong partners, weak partners, resource-based partners and ethnic partners. Within the partners, lies the strength of ties of the partners which could be as a result of factors such as trust. Therefore this study added sub-dimensions to those used in previous research. However, only resources possessed by partners used in previous research that was renamed resource-based partners. Also, in previous studies, trust was used as a sub-dimension of network structure but in this study, trust was found to be an unsuitable sub-dimension of network structure. Consequently, the modification and addition of indicators to network structure dimension of networking makes contribution to literature and adds new thinking to existing literature regarding network structure dimension.

Table 5: Summary of recommended constructs modified for network structure

Construct based on literature Review	Study Findings	Action
o Type of Partners	✓ Strong Partners (STP)*	- All the four constructs were rejected and new ones added i.e. Strong, Weak, Resource-based and Ethnic Partners
o Strength of Ties	✓ Weak Partners (WEP)*	- Strength of ties is depicted by the closeness of association of partners which seem to be embedded in the different types of partners
o Resources Possessed by Partners	✓ Resource-based Partners (RBP)*	- Resource possessed by partners was renamed resource-based partners.
o Trust between Partners	✓ Ethnic Partners (ETP)*	- Trust between partners was removed but incorporated as a construct in ND dimension.

Source: Study Findings, 2011

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