Identifying Interesting Cases and Themes in Qualitative Sampling: An Application in Relationship Marketing Research

Sulhaini

***Abstract*—This paper aims to provide an example of how theoretical sampling was applied in a relationship marketing research. Qualitative research requires different approach to sampling, however, it is one of the principal issue of confusion among qualitative researchers as there is little guidance to follow. The paper offers an example of how to select cases which are likely to help the author to build theory in relationship marketing area. The paper also elaborates the process through which the author identified interesting themes to be explored for the next stage of the study. Therefore, this paper will not provide the conclusion of the theory developed from the research, indeed it presents a conclusion of the identified interesting firms and themes to be explored further.**

***Index Terms*—Qualitative sampling, research themes, relationship marketing.**

I. Introduction

A number of authors have seen weaknesses in the development of the literature on relationship marketing [1]. Research within the relationship marketing area should aim at the development of theory in order to support its growth. Reference [1] suggested that using a deductive approach by means of theory testing might encounter difficulties since the area has not been well established and explored. His statement indicated that relationship marketing perspective requires theory generation to stimulate its development. He argued that there is a solid base of deductively derived theoretical and empirical studies on business relationship development phenomena. Qualitative and inductive case studies were more appropriate methods reflecting exploratory approaches to building theories in relationship marketing [2]. Yet, it is disappointing that *qualitative research* has not widely been applied to examine the relationships between firms [3] Accordingly, Reference [4] emphasizes the need for empirical evidence, not just in the narrow sense of quantitative testing but in its original sense of *real-world* cases and case study approach has a key role in building theory and it is better fits to inductive traditions and qualitative approach. It seems that those authors recommended the use of a method, which can facilitate the theory generation emergent from natural settings. This requires a sampling process of choosing research cases, yet the process is one of big confusions in qualitative research as there is no standard procedures to be followed [5]. There is a little guidance available for research on how to implement the sampling process [6]. Therefore, this paper aims to provide an example of how qualitative sampling was applied in a relationship marketing research i.e. a study on the experience of British companies in managing and developing business relationship in Indonesia. Nonetheless, as the author provided the companies with a confidentiality letter, the names of the companies have been changed throughout the paper.

The goal of sampling in qualitative research is to choose cases which are likely to extend theory or to provide examples of polar types and thus cases are diverse and purposefully selected for theoretical reasons [7]. In order to select the sampling companies, preliminary data was obtained, that identified their characteristics and their experiences in the Indonesian market. Data obtained from a questionnaire made the selection feasible, where the author obtained information on the companies' size; experience; business relationship development in the market; number of export markets, mode of entry and early information about business relationship elements. Those topics were selected as they were relevant to the focus of the study. From this, six companies were carefully and purposely selected due to their unique and interesting characteristics/experiences. The selected companies each represented a variation that ensured the study embraced multiple realities to enrich the theory generated. Also, as the result of process was the identification of a number of interesting issues, which in turn became the research themes indicated as they emerged in the discussion below.

II. The Sampling process

At the beginning of this research process, there were not a pre-determined number of cases to be employed until preliminary data from responding companies was obtained. That meant the cases were selected solely on the preliminary data. The study collected data through two stages namely: questionnaire survey and in-depth interview to build case studies. The questionnaire was sent to 123 exporters where 14 companies were approached three times and 35 companies were contacted twice within five months. Ten responses were obtained, and then they were examined for sample selection. Six companies were selected for the sample of the study because they had an interesting experience or characteristic from which the author could build theory and also they offered access to information. The sample size did not allow

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Sulhaini is with Faculty of Economics, University of Mataram, Jl. Pendidikan 37 Mataram Lombok Indonesia 83125 (Telp. 0062370644929, email: niniys@yahoo.co.uk)

for a statistical generalisation, but enabled deeper understandings of the development and management of international business relationships. Since the purpose of the study was to explore exporters' business relationships in a high-risk and uncertain market, different companies that have different experiences needed to be examined and a single case-study approach might have been too restrictive to capture a wider context of relationship development practice. The identification of themes helped to explore the exporters experience in more detail. However, at this stage, a final finding, conclusion of judgment of the results of the questionnaire could not be claimed. This stage was aimed at data generation in order to raise interesting questions for the identification of research themes. Another main objective of this step was to generate data about the British exporters, which assisted the selection of cases based on theoretical sampling, which was required to replicate or extend the emergent theory [8]. The British exporters must have experience of exporting to Indonesia during the economic crisis and increased instability of the market, which is discussed below.

A. Experience and Characteristics of the Respondents

Every selected firm had different characteristics and experience of developing and managing relationships in the market so that a holistic understanding was obtained from various sites. Table I below summarises the experience and characteristics of responding companies. The table suggests the age of the responding firms when they started exporting directly to Indonesia, most of the firms had been established for over twenty years, and in four cases exports only started after the firms had reached over 100 years of age. One possible explanation for this was the geographical distance between the UK and Indonesia, which might be a major consideration for international expansion. In the early stages of international expansion, firms tend to start exporting to neighbouring countries, as they have a lack of knowledge of foreign countries and a propensity to avoid uncertainty [9]. This suggests that firms started exporting to neighbouring countries or countries that were comparatively well-known to the firms and similar to the home country's culture, business climate and language due to lack of knowledge of foreign markets. Furthermore, according to [10], market expansion shows that firms move from closer nations to those that are increasingly physically distant. In consequence, firms initially entered psychically close countries before presenting in more distant countries as psychic distance was correlated with geographic distance [9]. *Psychic distance* has also been defined as factors preventing or disturbing the flow of information between the firm and target countries, including linguistic, institutional, cultural and political factors [10]. This implies that the greater the similarity between the export markets and the home country, the smoother the flow of information between the firms and their partners and the more rapid the execution. As the two countries under scrutiny (UK and Indonesia) have linguistic and cultural differences, the firms were not exporting to Indonesia in the early stages of their internationalisation, as they perceived a greater psychic distance; but they penetrated the country after they had gained sufficient knowledge or experience and become more confident of operating in wider geographical markets. Nonetheless, Waingate already had a rich experience operating internationally but this company seemed to fail exporting to Indonesia. It seems that its experience did not help the company to maintain and develop stable business relationships in a volatile market. **Waingate** is an interesting case to be employed in the study.

TABLE I: EXPERIENCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDING COMPANIES

Experience and Characteristics	Companies
Age of Firms when started exporting directly to Indonesia	
≤ 20 years	North West
21 – 50 years	Bridgeside, Verdon, Pittafin, Froster Fencing, Folden,
51 – 100 years	-
≥ 101 years	Border, Waingate, Newtonland, Serchamex
Experience of Direct Export to Indonesia	
≤ 5 years	North West, Folden
6 - 15 years	Pittafin, Serchamex, Froster Fencing, Bridgeside
16 – 25 years	Verdon
≥ 26 years	Border, Waingate, Newtonland
Entry mode to Indonesia	
Directly to end users	North West
Agent/representative	Bridgeside
Distributor	Froster Fencing, Pittafin, Folden, Verdon, Newtonland, Serchamex
Agent and Distributor	Border
Customers and Agent	Waingate
Number of employees	
≤ 50 employees	North West
51-100 employees	-
101-150 employees	Waingate
≥151 employees	Bridgeside, Serchamex, Pittafin, Froster Fencing, Border, Folden, Verdon, Newtonland

Knowledge of individual markets is not the only source of information for a firm; *general knowledge* of operating internationally has a critical impact on market servicing decisions in individual countries [11]. Reference [12] found that greater environmental variation increased knowledge and taught firms how to manage a variety of situations, and this led to lower costs of international expansion. Thus, lack of variation is costly for firms, and those that are not exposed to environmental variation do not develop knowledge of management of their internationalisation efforts. Again, this suggests that the market diversification strategy is less costly. As the respondents applied a market diversification strategy, it suggests that they all had general knowledge of exporting. Reliance on this strategy meant that they had already obtained rich experience and knowledge from various market settings. Firms' knowledge can be increased when they operate in diverse countries where they are exposed to various situations and experiences. Moreover, the diversity of firms' international experiences increases *business relationship experience*, which is easily applied to ongoing business in a new country or an existing market [13]. They confronted great market variations, from which competition, government regulation, culture, politics and business climate could be learnt. Since general knowledge can be applied in individual countries, they might be more confident in every export market they hade. However, with regard to the situation in Indonesia, which might be different from other markets, a question emerges regarding how experience and knowledge could influence the development of business relationships in the volatile market.

The information from the table above suggests that six firms had less than fifteen years experience, whilst four firms had longer experience in Indonesia, indicating that the four firms had more experience of interaction with local companies. The experience might result in better knowledge of how to find and establish business relationships with Indonesian companies and they learnt how their partners work and what their requirements are. The responding firms increased their presence in Indonesia by accumulating experiential, market-specific knowledge with reference to culture, customers, business and the market's structure [9]. The four firms with the greatest experience might have a better understanding of the market mechanism; better ability to find market opportunities and deal with market threats; better personal contacts and communication with partners and greater ability in selecting agents or distributors, all of which led to a greater ability to build and maintain relationships. The four firms might have a more stable business relationship compared to those companies with less experience of exporting directly to the country, but one responding firm (Waingate) that had considerable experience (32 years) has terminated relationships three times in four years during turbulent periods in the country. It seems that the company's long experience could not help it to cope with the adverse effect of the crisis in the market. Also, it seems that experience did not help the company to maintain and develop stable business relationships in an uncertain environment. Again, **Waingate** seems to be an interesting case, it was then selected for further exploration.

Interestingly, all respondents exported to more than 50 countries with export sales representing more than 50% of total sales, and some firms (50% of the respondents) had exports that made up to 80% of their total sales, which could be categorised as having a high level of international sales intensity [14]. This indicates that all the companies were developing their exports as a large proportion of their total sales and becoming very dependent on foreign markets. The firms with high levels of export intensity would be expected to develop a greater internal capability not only to recognise the importance of overcoming exporting problems, but also to tackle these problems. Meanwhile, firms characterised by low levels of export intensity were less likely to undertake export information activities; maintained less commitment to exporting as they mobilised limited resources to support their international marketing efforts; and exhibited greater levels of risk perception in international markets as they perceived more environmental uncertainty [15]. This suggests that the firms with higher levels of export intensity would have a greater capability not only to adjust to new realities, but also to overcome problems that arose as consequences of environmental changes. As a result, they would be more likely to survive compared to firms with a lower level of export intensity. This may suggest that export intensity relates to a company's ability to maintain their business in every export market; however this issue is beyond the scope of the study.

North West was still small in terms of the number of employees. It has been suggested that small companies export a lower share of their sales because of company and managerial factors such as: limited resources; scale economies and high risks perception of international markets [16]. Therefore, this suggests that a larger firm with more resources is able to develop its exports as it has more capability to explore international market opportunities. Thus, a larger firm is more likely to have a high level of export intensity and company size relates to the level of export intensity. This is an interesting issue, but it is beyond the scope of this study. North West, although small, showed high export intensity and served over 50 countries. The firm might have disadvantages but they were able to export to various countries indicating that size was not a barrier for international sales intensity. It suggests that any size of firm was able to drive a large percentage of its revenues from international markets and become very dependent on export sales. It is still unclear, however, how firm size could explain the firm's ability to develop business relationships in the Indonesian market

The responding firms were active in a range of selected countries (more than 50 country markets), suggesting that those companies were implementing a market diversification strategy. The strategy might not only offer higher profitability but also profit stability for exporters in comparison to a market concentration strategy [17], and suggests better performance would be seen in the companies' export sales. Actually, the use of this strategy is a method for reducing risks through involvement in wider geographic markets, thus avoiding high dependency on a few selected countries. According to reference [35], market diversification provides greater flexibility, as a firm is less dependent on particular markets and has lower perceptions of risk; this may lead to a company reducing their commitment to a particular market that is experiencing greater risk.

Having a large number of export markets (more than 50 countries) may mean they had to manage a customer relationship portfolio, and had to analyse or asses the current and projected benefits resulting from each individual relationship [18]. Based on the assessment, they may have choices over which relationships they want to commit to further. Nevertheless, choice is perhaps the most difficult aspect in relationship portfolio management since the development of a closer relationship with a particular customer may involve a higher level of commitment, leading the supplier to accept a more distant relationship with others [18]. This may suggest that the supplier faces choices where they have to make evaluations and realistic appraisals of the potential benefits of the commitment. Furthermore, reference [19] suggested that management of a customer relationship portfolio also means evaluating the relationships in term of risks. The companies might evaluate their relationships in all of their export markets including Indonesia where they might also analyse the risk and uncertainty in the market in order to make decisions on which relationships they should increase commitment. In respect to the increasing risk and uncertainty in the Indonesian market, they might view that their relationship in the market entails a greater risk and less profit, discouraging them to commit further. This suggests that the evaluation required knowledge and assessment of each individual market. As they had a rich experience of exporting to diverse markets, they might be more confident in every export market they had and had a better assessment on the relationships and the markets allowing the companies to make choices in managing their relationship portfolio. Consequently, a question emerges of how their customer relationship portfolio management may affect the development of business relationships in the Indonesian market.

The data suggested that Bridgeside had a representative although it supplied one customer only; whilst Border exported through two modes (agents and distributors). The first company might become more involved in the marketing process when selling through agents rather than through distributors, and more resources were required to support these export operations [20], which indicates that these entry modes required different levels of commitment and resources. The exporters' possession of resources seemed to be a critical criterion for the strategic choice of entry modes. Larger firms are believed to have more resources and capabilities. Exporting through agents is more likely to be used by larger firms than by smaller firms. The table above suggests that nine companies who relied on agents or distributors were larger in size (having more than 100 employees). However, a smaller responding firm, i.e. North West, exported directly to end-users without an intermediary or sales subsidiary. It seems that **North West** was an interesting case to explore further, hence this company was selected. Also, **Bridgeside** was selected as the company used a representative although serving only one customer.

B. Business Relationship Development

In order to have a description of the companies' experience of business relationship development, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with five statements ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The following table indicates the respondents' perception towards their business partners in Indonesia. The questionnaire, however, did not cite all aspects of each element; consequently, the results give indications of the elements.

The table below suggested indications of commitment, cooperation, trust and relationship uncertainty. Most respondents felt their partners were really helpful, that their partners cooperated with the firms to achieve their goals. This suggests mutuality/reciprocity factor of cooperation [21]. The question was used in order to reveal cooperation in the relationships, and to demonstrate partners' support in achieving goals, and partners' interest in and responsiveness towards maintaining a co-operative relationship. The second question gave similar results, suggesting the responding firms' long-term orientation on the relationship. The question was formulated based on what was suggested by reference [22] who analysed commitment in distribution channels. The authors suggested that commitment in a relationship entails a long-term orientation and assumes that the relationship is stable and will continue long enough for channel members to realize the long-term benefits. The results may suggest that respondents had a positive perception toward their partners and that profitable relationships could be maintained through cooperation. Respondents' willingness to cooperate further, signaling commitment, could be a result of satisfaction from past experience, which generated positive perceptions towards their partners. Nonetheless, although the responses indicated that most of the companies actively cooperated with local partners, and that they were satisfied and committed to the relationships, yet only Bridgeside suggests a high level of trust as the company strongly agreed with the statement.

TABLE II: PERCEPTION TOWARD LOCAL PARTNERS

Items	Companies				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Our partner(s) in Indonesia are really helpful	Serchamex, Bridgeside	North West, Folden, Verdon, Pittafin, Newtonland, Border	-	Verdon, Waingate	-
We believe that over the long run our relationships with our partner(s) in Indonesia will be profitable	Serchamex, Bridgeside,	North West, Border, Folden, Froster Fencing, Newtonland, Pittafin,	Verdon	Waingate	-
Our partner(s) are actively working together with us and our business relationships are growing	Bridgeside	Folden, North West, Newtonland, Serchamex, Border, Pittafin, Froster Fencing	Verdon	Waingate	-
We can rely on our partner(s) in Indonesia to keep their promises	Bridgeside	Pittafin, Serchamex, North West	Folden, Froster Fencing, Newtonland, Verdon, Border	-	Waingate
Relationships with Indonesian business partners are not characterized by a great degree of uncertainty	Bridgeside	Pittafin, Serchamex, North West	Folden, Froster Fencing, Newtonland, Verdon	Border	Waingate

Source: primary data

The last question in this section was adopted from the work of reference [23] who studied successful export business relationships from a behavioural perspective. The result varied where Bridgeside viewed that its business relationships was relatively certain as the respondent strongly agreed with the statement, whilst Waingate felt a high uncertainty. Feeling uncertain about their relationships' future may be caused by inadequate information and limited exposure to the market, which in turn meant that the firms could not make future decisions regarding their relationships with confidence [23]. The respondent was feeling uncertain about their relationships; which may mean that the company was uncertain about their partners' future behaviour.

The discussion above provided a partial explanation of the elements and thus some issues remained unclear. First, what were the emerging relationship elements explaining the development of the business relationship when the market became volatile? Second, how did the elements develop when the market was increasingly uncertain? Also, the table above suggests that, in comparison to the others, Bridgeside had a better perception towards its local partners meaning that it had a good working business relationship. On the contrary, Waingate had a rather negative perception toward its partner. Hence, both companies were selected for further investigation.

In order to find how the companies were dependent on their partners, respondents were asked to identify the importance of each element for the development of their relationships. The answers were numerous and showed how they perceived their relationships in the country as illustrated in the Table III below.

The first question was intended to obtain information about exporters' dependence on their relationships in Indonesia and was adapted from a study by reference [23]. The table above indicates that, in general, respondents perceived relationships with the Indonesian companies as important to their businesses, meaning that they were relatively dependent on their partners. This perception might have encouraged them to have a long-term orientation; actively cooperate with their partners; show efforts towards extensive information exchange through devoting their resources; achieving mutual satisfaction; building mutual trust and adapting. This suggested that dependence existed, as they believed that the relationships had brought about reliable and steady sources of income and/or helped in achieving their business objectives. An implication of the firms' dependence upon partners can be seen from how they devoted resources to the relationships [24]. The responding firms perceived their relationships as important, which made them become dependent on the relationships and encouraged commitment, and a willingness to adapt to specific customer needs. This suggested that the firm with greatest dependency had greatest commitment to the relationships and willingness to adapt (suggesting a greater customer orientation). Here, a question appears of how the orientation could influence business relationship development. Further, being dependent on their partners, the respondents took the view that adaptation to meet partners/customers' demand was important to keep the relationships working. This meant that adaptation was viewed as an essential element in strengthening and prolonging the relationships as adaptation contributes to satisfaction.

TABLE III: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS

Items	Companies			
	Very important	Important	Not really import ant	Not import-ant at all
Continuation of business relationships In Indonesia	Bridgeside, Serchamex, Border, Froster Fencing, North West,	Pittafin, Folden, Verdon, Newtonlan d, Waingate	-	-
Information exchange with business partner(s) in Indonesia	Bridgeside, Serchamex, Froster Fencing, North West,	Border, Pittafin, Folden, Verdon, Newtonlan d,	Waingate	-
Cooperation with business partner(s) In Indonesia	Folden, Bridgeside, Serchamex, North West,	Froster Fencing, Pittafin, Border, Verdon, Newtonlan d	Waingate	-
Mutual trust with business partner(s) In Indonesia	Waingate, Pittafin, Newtonland, Bridgeside, Serchamex, North West,	Border, Verdon, Folden, Froster Fencing,	-	-
Mutual satisfaction with business partner(s) in Indonesia	Waingate, Pittafin, Newtonland, Bridgeside, Serchamex, North West,	Border, Verdon, Folden, Froster Fencing,	-	-
Devoting company's resources (financial, time and staff) to business relationships in Indonesia	Froster Fencing	Bridgeside, Border, Verdon, Newtonlan d, Pittafin, Folden, Froster Fencing,	-	Waingate
Adaptation to respond partners' demand in Indonesia	Froster Fencing, North West, Bridegside, Newtonland	Border, Verdon, Folden, Serchamex, Waingate, Pittafin,	-	-

Regarding mutual satisfaction, respondents perceived this aspect as either very important or important. Mutual satisfaction seemed to be a necessary aspect of maintenance of the relationships, and thus it was an indication of their dependence. The responses suggested that most of the respondents were committed and viewed devoting company resources (financial, time and staff) to the relationship as an important aspect in maintaining the relationship. This was also suggested in the data about their satisfaction. Hence, satisfaction with past experience led to firms' desire to nurture their relationships, as they perceived the relationships as crucial to their business. This aspect was emphasised by reference [26], who found that satisfaction allowed a business relationship to progress to the point where commitment existed between the parties involved. Accordingly, reference [26], based on his study of Norwegian suppliers, found that relationship continuity was a strong effect of satisfaction. Respondents were also aware of the importance of their commitment to the relationships, devoting their resources to making adaptations in response to partners' requirements. This may suggest that they committed to create partners/customers satisfaction leading to a greater partners/customers commitment to the relationships. Creating partners/customers satisfaction would stimulate mutual satisfaction and mutual commitment leading to stable business relationships. However, how they maintained customer satisfaction in the volatile market remains unclear.

Nevertheless, albeit there were indications that most of the respondents to the questionnaire were satisfied and had a desire to keep the relationships working, seven relationships were terminated during market turbulence. Although they felt that adaptation to the relationships was an important aspect, in fact only two companies carried out such adaptations. It seemed that the intention was not always translated into action. This was particularly interesting as the relationships were exposed to changing business environment where adaptation might have been necessary to obtain a general fit between the companies and the market conditions [27]. Any change in the environment may cause changes in the way firms manage relationships, as the changes create new market realities and the existing practice may no longer fit with them. In short, in an increasingly dynamic and turbulent market environment, a firm's ability to develop and successfully manage its relationships with other firms emerges as a key competence and source of sustainable competitive advantage [28]. Consequently, the two companies that carried out adaptation i.e. **North West and Froster Fencing**, were selected for further investigation.

C. Business Relationship Management

There has been some limited research published on relationship management as the action in a relationship, as can be seen in the work of reference [29][30]. In this study, relationship management is concerned with the management of interactions with others [31]. Relationship management is explored in the context of its practice, or the actions taken within the business relationships that influence their development. Therefore, the discussion here contributes to the understanding of how the respondents manage their interactions in order to develop their business relationships. The extant literature suggested that communication has a critical role in managing relationships [3]. The importance of communication lies not only within the companies but also within the partners. As seen in table IV showing communication between respondents and their partners, three respondents felt that, in general terms, their communication activities were becoming more active as their exports increased. One possible explanation for this was that once the companies received repeat orders, communication subsequently increase as there would have to be contacts in order to discuss: product, shipment, payment, requirements, etc. In the case of terminated relationships, there was no information flow between the firms and information exchange had ceased. Four companies still visited their partners as frequently as they had before the market became unstable. Unfortunately, there was no explanation of how visit frequency influenced the development of business relationships in a high-risk and uncertain market.

They intended to keep in touch with their partners to ensure the ongoing process of information exchange. By doing this, the parties might respond better to new opportunities and threats [32]. Therefore, communication processes may result in valuable information that consists of business opportunities, news or ideas about how to respond to market changes. Having a frequent flow of information facilitates a greater understanding of environmental changes and higher interdependence between the parties. This may suggest that ensuring information flow is critical to acquire up-to-date market and customer knowledge. This appears to be important in uncertain market conditions, where exporters' need to monitor and observe. It is an interesting issue to explore in the next phase of the investigation.

TABLE IV: THE FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION WITH PARTNERS

	Companies			
	Increasing	**Stable**	**Decreasing**	**Terminated**
Communication	Bridgeside, Froster Fencing, Serchamex,	Pittafin, North West, Newtonland	Border, Folden	Verdon, Waingate
Visiting partners	Froster Fencing, Serchamex,	Bridgeside, Pittafin, North West, Newtonland	Folden	Waingate, Verdon, Border
Number of staff involved	Froster Fencing, Serchamex,	Bridgeside, Pittafin, North West, Newtonland	Folden	Border, Waingate, Verdon

As suggested by the table above, more active communication with partners did not mean that visits to partners were more frequent or that increased numbers of staff were involved. Indeed, the companies used email, fax, and telephone, as these were more cost effective. E-mail communication, in particular, was able to work around the time differences. The frequency of visits did not increase, and might even be postponed in response to UK foreign office advice. Border, for example, although its business relationships still existed, did not carry out visits after the crisis. Hence, **Border** was selected for further exploration.

D. Risk Management

Since the study explored business relationship development in the context of a high risk and uncertain market, then information on risk management of the companies should be gained. Business risk in a particular country could be estimated from the stability of its currency [33]. Therefore, in the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate which currency they accepted from their

Indonesian buyers. The data suggested that none of the respondents accepted Rupiah - the Indonesian currency; which may mean that they were avoiding risk, since the Indonesian currency has developed poorly since the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Five of the respondents accepted US Dollars from their Indonesian buyers, which raises the interesting issue of why US Dollars were accepted instead of GBP, a stronger currency. This suggests that the exporters' customer orientation [34] was stronger. They manufactured in the UK and paid manufacturing and marketing costs in GBP, meaning that risks, particularly of exchange rate fluctuation, were taken by selling in US Dollars. Among the respondents, only **North West** accepted GBP only, this makes the company an interesting case to explore.

Exporters respond to increasing risk in the environment by reshaping their risk management policy. Also, external aspects affect the risk management taken by exporters. For example, the market situation would be reflected by exchange rate fluctuation: the more uncertain a market, the more unpredictable the exchange rate and the higher the financial risk faced by the exporters. Further, since the Asian Financial Crisis hit the market, the risk of non-payment was greater than when the market was stable. This situation might have pushed exporters to reshape their policy to maintain a guarantee of payment. Thus, questions emerge regarding risk management: how they maintain guarantees of payment; how they maintained a customer orientation while managing risks; how they behaved towards risks.

III. Conclusion

The examination of the responses obtained from questionnaire survey not only made the selection feasible but aided the author's pre-understanding of each selected case. This contributed to the author's development of an in-depth interview guide.

The table below summarises the identified interesting issues of the discussion above. The table shows how a number of companies were selected for further exploration for unique or interesting characteristics/experiences. As stated earlier, access to information was also the main consideration for selection. Four out of ten companies were not selected. They were Newtonland, Folden, Verdon and Serchamex. Newtonland was not selected as this company had similar characteristics and experience to Pittafin in terms of: number of employees, entry mode, perception and communication. Pittafin was selected as this company as the main informant of Newtonland was leaving the company. The staff member who took over his position showed his willingness to participate. He did not, however, have experience and knowledge of dealing with Indonesian customers as he had been the regional manager for Middle East Markets. The author decided to withdraw Newtonland for further exploration. The main informant of Serchamex, meanwhile, stayed in Taiwan, which was beyond the reach of the author. Both distance and the holding of an Indonesian official passport restricted the author in visiting the country. Folden and Verdon were not selected as they located in Northern Ireland. Also, they had similar characteristics and experience to Border and Waingate in terms of the number of employees, communication and perception. Consequently, the six companies selected for the study were: ***North West, Waingate, Border, Bridgeside, Pittafin and Froster Fencing***. The identified interesting issues summarised in Table V become the research themes: they guided the focus of the next stage in the investigation.

TABLE V: Identified Interesting Cases and Issues

Topics	**Interestin g Cases**	**Interesting Issues/Research Themes**
Experience & Characteristic of Respondents	North West, Waingate, Border and Bridgeside	How experience and knowledge could influence the development of business relationships in the volatile market. How firm size could explain the firm's ability to develop business relationships in the Indonesian market How their customer relationship portfolio management influenced business relationship development in the high-risk and uncertain market.
Business Relationship Developmen t	Bridgeside, Froster Fencing, North West and Waingate	How customer orientation could influence business relationship development. How the companies maintained satisfaction in the volatile market What were the emerging relationship elements explaining the development of the business relationship when the market became volatile? How did the elements develop when the market was increasingly uncertain?
Business Relationship Managemen t	Border	How visit frequency influenced the development of business relationships in a high-risk and uncertain market. How the companies ensured that the process of market knowledge acquisition
Risk Managemen t	North West	How they maintained guarantees of payment How they maintained a customer orientation while managing risks How they behaved towards risks.

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Sulhaini is currently a lecturer and researcher at the University of Mataram Lombok-Indonesia majoring in Management. She completed her Doctoral Program in International Marketing from Sheffield Hallam University, UK in 2007 and her Master of Science in International Marketing and Management from Copenhagen Business School in 1998. Her area of expertise is in International Marketing Management with interest in Export Behaviour and Relationship Marketing. The subjects that she taught include Global Marketing, Marketing Management, Strategic Marketing Management and Qualitative Methodology.