Offshoring: a matter of bridging cultural differences

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Abstract

In our paper we focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have found their way into offshore relations. The relations are built from either an economic or emotional point of view. We were particularly interested in how North-West European and Anglo-Saxon SMEs owner/managers build, maintain, and--when necessary--exit their relationships with other SMEs. Therefore, we reviewed existing literature and we have chosen for a qualitative research strategy by conducting semi-structured interviews in The Netherlands, Germany, UK, Denmark and Sweden. Literature study suggests that trust is of the essence in the relationship building process and that the perception of trust needs to be understood and managed in multi-cultural relations. Additionally, we can conclude from our qualitative research that SMEs are intrinsically inclined to base their offshore relationships on trust. For practical reasons, partners in offshore relationships need to be educated and trained how to build trust in multi-cultural relations and that the firms’ cultures need to be taken into account, too.

Key words: Trust, Relationship quality, Cultural differences, Outsourcing, Offshoring

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Introduction

Business models and business processes are undergoing tremendous changes because markets are changing, competition becomes stronger and consumer behavior is changing too (Miles et al. 2010). The chance for small and middle-sized enterprises (SMEs) to survive in rapidly growing dynamic market environments is a challenge (Business Week 2011; Willcocks and Craig 2010). Therefore, SMEs perceive a need to search for new business opportunities by thinking about networking and building alliances or offshoring/outsourcing of their business processes.

Offshoring/outsourcing (o./o.) is currently mostly related to IT processes that can be managed cheaper and more effectively outside the own company and the domestic market. SMEs are running a higher risk than bigger companies do when they offshore/outsourcing their business processes (Devos et al. 2009). Research and practice in the area of o./o. has been biased by experiences of large firms. But, as pointed out by Devos et al. (2009), a SME is not a scale model of a large firm and, therefore, generic research results and best practices do not necessarily offer the best advice to SMEs. Thus, it is relevant to look more specifically into how SMEs can manage the offshore and outsource activities properly to reduce costs, make processes more effective, retain market competitiveness and make use of expertise that is innovative although hard to get.
Throughout this chapter we use the following definitions of o./o.. According to Contractor et al. (2010), offshoring is restructuring the firm geographically away from the home location to a location abroad whereas outsourcing is defined as an organizational restructuring by giving business activities to a third party. In our paper we concentrate on offshore activities of SMEs because when leaving the home location and going abroad, the firm is faced with cultural differences of people involved.

From cultural diversity theory (Minkov and Hofstede 2011), we know that getting in contact with partners in foreign countries is a sensitive part that either fosters or hinders a good relationship. Therefore, the first contact with “others” is a crucial point for business partners in the o./o. process.

Furthermore, we know from agency theory that formal work is preferred by Anglo-Saxon companies in contrast to informal work approaches with a partner-based relationship practiced by Northern European companies (Adams et al. 2010; Mathrani et al. 2007). Also, SMEs appear to be more inclined towards informal working methods than large companies (Devos et al. 2009).

Partner-based approaches are associated with relationships which are specifically defined by the trust level that is developed over time between human beings. The development of trust goes through different levels or stages of a process. As a starting point, trust can be built on positive experience, personal embeddedness,
openness, honesty and integrity, sharing benefits and risks, commitment and patience (Stel 2011). Additionally, trust can be built on two levels, either on a formal or an informal level. The importance of the relationship quality is outlined by Rottman (2008) who found that almost 50% of enterprises failed to offshore or outsource successfully due to weak relationship ties. We know that companies experienced contradicting results with regard to the relationship quality level between partners and formality of working methods when they o./o. their processes (Rottman 2008; Devos et al. 2009). Although SMEs seem to be hesitant to offshore, they show increasing interest in networking, cooperation as well as sharing knowledge, resources and working tools. In this context, cooperation can be seen as a pre-step in the offshore process because, according to Stel (2011), cooperation requires the willingness to accept counterparts as they are and not as others perceive they should be. The initiative for a cooperation lies in building a partnership. “A partnership works on the basis of trust and commitment or not at all” (Stel 2011). Starting a partnership opens the door for the development of o./o. activities. Partnership in its origin is similar to cooperation, alliances or collaboration. In this research we are particularly interested in how relationships are developed for doing business among SMEs as partners with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, our overarching aim in this paper is to position the current developments in SMEs whether they are willing to become effective players in offshoring business while considering trust as an important relationship component.
Our paper is outlined as follows. Firstly, we start with reviewing appropriate literature on SMEs’ o./o. activities and the factor trust. We continue with positioning offshore activities in relation to trust. The chapter is followed by the methodology and the results. We continue with the discussion and finalize the paper with our conclusions, implications and future research.

**Position of O./O. in SMEs**

Research on o./o. has been quite extensively pursued over decades (Hätönen and Eriksson 2009; Contractor et al. 2010). The researchers highlighted that in regard to o./o., a switch from purely cost reduction to optimizing resources, and thus from procurement to cooperation has taken place over years. This is also strongly related to a partner-based approach as outlined by Child et al (2005). The researchers highlighted that trust is an essential part of cooperation since cooperation with a partner outside the company - and maybe in a foreign country - is expected to be challenging. Challenges lie in the development of a relationship among people from different cultural backgrounds because their thinking, beliefs and attitudes might be different and result in various dimensions according to Minkov and Hofstede (2011). These dimensions are power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs femininity and uncertainty avoidance (Minkov and Hofstede 2011).
Notwithstanding these four dimensions, one core element of successful relationships appeared to be trust again as Lee and Huynh (2005) outlined in their study. Trust may be defined as “the belief that others upon whom one depends, yet has little control over, will not take advantage of the situation by behaving in an opportunistic manner” (Devos et al. 2009). For an SME owner/manager, considered as an individual who represents his own business, it is vital at the beginning of a relationship to start working on the process that the counterpart trust him and that he can trust the other.

The process might start with considering the competence of each other as outlined by Ibrahim and Ribbers (2009). In this context, the owner/manager is dependent on the first impressions of his partner in order to continue building a relationship (Dunning et al. 2011; Fetchenhauer and Dunning 2009). Additionally, following Duncan et al. (2009), the owner/manager’s expertise, attitudes and behavior play a key role in defining the direction and condition of the SME.

Moreover, the question might arise whether there is a difference in the way an SME goes about building a relationship as compared to the way a large company proceeds in this area. We know from other studies (Perrini et al. 2007; Russo and Perrini 2009) that this must be not necessarily the case. The difference may lie in company’s needs, flexibility, purchasing power, financial and human resources (Perrini et al. 2007). In this context the agency theory might be considered too because its focus lies on power-based relation-
ships rather than partner-based relationships as outlined in inter-organizational trust approaches (Adams et al. 2010).

Bearing this in mind, we hypothesize the following:

• The quality of relationships among SMEs seems to be more dependent on the level of informality than is the case among large enterprises
• Trust is the essence of building relationships and can bridge cultural differences
• Trust can be developed and managed
• SMEs are intrinsically better qualified for building trust and relationships than big companies

The aforementioned hypotheses help us to structure our thinking and help us to point out what the crucial elements are when companies offshore. In this research, the trust levels between partners are divided into initial trust (pre-contract phase) and mutual trust (post-contract phase) as outlined in Figure 1 and described in the following sections.
The term “Trust”:

Trust is something that we all need when we want to live and work together with other human beings. It does not appear on command. Trust develops over time and is a key in relationships, either in private life or in business. From a social science point of view, trust is something that is related to liking and disliking (Baumeister and Bushman 2010) and is also dependent on our first mutual impressions of each other (Fetchenhauer and Duning 2009). Stel (2011) laid out that trust can be defined as an emotional expression or as a
rational consideration. However, we found various definitions and considerations of trust and based on this we take the variance as a starting point to bring the definitions down to initial trust and mutual trust.

Dividing trust in line with the contract life cycle (pre-contract and post-contract phase) clarifies the timeline of building trust from initial trust to mutual (existing) trust. The division into these two parts is drawn from the findings of an exploratory study of Bharadwa et al. (2010). With this particular division, the whole contract life cycle can be covered in a clear way. As Brown and Wilson (2005) state, “O./o. can be viewed as a cycle, beginning with the decision-making process, followed by managing the contract, then evaluating the results and finally re-examining the outsourcing contract”.

**Pre-contract phase**

During the pre-contract phase, organizations have to consider several important choices and decisions before starting actual o./o. relationship. These choices and decisions can include selecting the right supplier, agreeing on the content of the contract with the supplier, or defining the length of the contract of (Bharadwa et al. 2010). Moreover, SMEs have to look for smaller and therefore lesser known partners. This is a hard search since the process of finding acceptable partners is currently an underdeveloped issue. In the pre-contact phase one of the key factors involving these searches and decisions
is the development, and at the end the existence, of the initial trust between the client and the supplier (Bharadwa et al. 2010).

**Initial trust**

Lee and Huynh (2005) draw their findings from previous studies which show the beginning of inter-organizational relationships is the most critical time for building successful inter-organizational relationships. Initial trust plays a key role here: it creates the basis for the mutual, existing trust of the partners, and therefore highly affects the success of the partnership. The interview questions about initial trust were therefore formed from questions related to cognition-based initial trust and calculation-based initial trust (Lee et al. 2008).

The basis of cognition-based initial trust is cognitive reasoning (McAllister 1995). Cognition-based trust can be developed for example if the client is impressed and convinced by a supplier’s experience and previous successful business relationships. It is reasonable to ask questions regarding cognition-based initial trust for gaining insights about the client’s cognitive reasoning towards the service provider’s earlier achievements.
Initial distrust

When measuring initial trust in relationships between business partners, it is also important to take the effects of initial distrust into consideration. Lee et al. (2008) state that trust can be seen as confident positive expectations from one partner towards the other. Lewicki and Bunker (1995) define the meaning of distrust as the opposite of trust; it can be seen as confident negative expectations toward the other partner: “distrust evokes fear and actions to buffer oneself from the harmful conduct of the other party”. Initial distrust can be divided further into psychology-based distrust and economic-based distrust. Lee et al. (2008) draw this division from the findings of McKnight et al. (1998). The interview questions about psychology-based distrust were built to get a client’s initial view about how negative perceptions they had about the partner, regarding for example its honesty towards the client.

Post-contract phase

In this paper, the post-contract phase covers the time period starting from the early stage of the business relationship when initial trust already exists, until the very end of the business relationship. The post-contract phase includes decisions such as should the contract be extended or not, or should a change of the supplier be taken into consideration. Also continuous performance monitoring of the supplier is done during the post-contract phase (Bharadwa et al. 2010).
In this phase the level and existence of mutual trust is vital as is a good level of knowledge sharing.

**Mutual (existing) trust**

Mutual trust, or in other words the existing trust between the business partners, is an important factor in interactions between a customer and a service provider. According to Lee et al. (2008), these interactions can go beyond the rules, agreements and expectations specified in legal contracts because of the commitment and contributions of the partners in the relationship, and these commitments and contributions can go beyond what was defined in the contract.

Lee et al. (2008) state that projects involving new knowledge creation requires knowledge sharing. However, to have successful knowledge sharing, there must exist also a strong level of mutual trust between partners. Also, Inkpen and Tsang (2005) state that in regard to knowledge sharing, it is important to have sufficient trust so that the partners do not view each other as competitors. If the customer (client) identifies the existence of distinctive knowledge sharing factors, such as sharing business reports or sharing know-how, it indicates the existence of mutual trust.

**Mutual distrust**

If both partners distrust each other, the relationship comes to an end. Distrust appears via negative experience, negative impressions or
negative word-of-mouth promotion. Notwithstanding the trust level between two human beings, there is a neoclassical economics tendency to consider distrust in others—strangers—as something that should be avoided at all costs (Dunning et al. 2011). However, a relationship can still continue between partners because of business-related constraints.

**Methodology**

In earlier research studies on trust the trust level was measured on a Likert scale and reflected the individual perception of each item. In interviews and observations (Stel 2011) collected data were transformed, reduced and analyzed by factor analysis techniques. In our research, we have chosen a qualitative research strategy to get deeper into relationship qualities based on trust and to ensure that we can develop practical recommendations for SMEs based on our findings. Therefore, we decided to conduct 16 semi-structured interviews with owner/managers of SMEs in Germany, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden.

**Sample**

Our sample consists of 16 SMEs in five selected countries bearing in mind that one country (UK) is Anglo-Saxon oriented and four countries are Northern European countries (G, NL, D, SW). We followed
the SME definition (turnover, employees, balance sheet total) of the European Commission (European Commission 2012) and searched for companies that have/had experience with o./o. activities within the IT field or outside the IT domain. In Table 1 the 16 SMEs are listed with the type of business as well as with the number of employees.

Table 1: Summary of conducted interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC1</td>
<td>Telecommunication</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC2</td>
<td>Satellite-communication</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC3</td>
<td>Health supplements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC4</td>
<td>Management Consulting</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC1</td>
<td>Foreign Exchange (FOREX)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC2</td>
<td>(Medical) care communication</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC3</td>
<td>Application development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC4</td>
<td>Service desk, infrastructure management</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC5</td>
<td>Software development</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC6</td>
<td>Software development</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
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<th>United Kingdom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC1</td>
<td>Software development</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
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Denmark

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<tr>
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<th>Industry</th>
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<tr>
<td>DC1</td>
<td>Audio devices</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC2</td>
<td>Management Consulting</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
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Sweden

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<tr>
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<th>Industry</th>
<th>Employees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC1</td>
<td>Biogas technology</td>
<td>&lt;250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC2</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC3</td>
<td>Management Consulting</td>
<td>Up to 1500 employees placed all over the world</td>
</tr>
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Instrument

The semi-structured interviews consisted of questions drawn from the research of Lee et al. (2008) about trust between partners in offshore business, and associated with Bharadwaj et al. (2010)’s division of contract life cycle in outsourcing. Interviews were conducted with either a founder, director, or manager applying a semi-structure so that interviewees could express their feelings and emotions additionally. By following the framework of trust, the details of the interviews were structured by starting with a company overview and ending on an interview conclusion that illuminates the current company’s thinking on o./o. and their related activities.
Analysis

11 interviews were recorded and for five interviews notes were taken. Afterwards, the content of the taped interviews was transcribed and results of the notes were inserted into an excel sheet with the purpose to find common patterns and to draw appropriate conclusions from that.

Results

In the following paragraph, we summarize the most interesting outcomes of the interviews in each selected country. Quotes from the original interview text were specifically marked.

Germany

The interviewees state that they prefer to offshore/outsourced to partners that have a close proximity. Also, geographically close partners have a better understanding of regulations important to the o./o. company.

All of the interviewed German companies have experienced the interaction with different cultures in their businesses. The companies stated that communication, and especially language, is one of their main concerns when interacting with different countries and cultures. Furthermore, characteristics and traits of partners of a diffe-
rent cultural background pose potential for misunderstandings that lead to difficulties.

To deal with difficulties, the interviewees argue that adequate and thorough preparation before starting a relationship is necessary and vital. It is important to understand the respective culture and adapting to it accordingly.

**The Netherlands**

The interviewees name cost factors and a lack of competences as the reason for offshoring/outsourcing. The relationships of all Dutch companies are to some extent affected by cultural differences. Eastern states such as Belarus and Estonia, as well as Cyprus are mentioned as important business partners. The companies stated that trust and quality is important when engaging in offshoring/outsourcing partnerships. One must rely on the partner and his promises to deliver according to quality expectations. Improving the quality of communication was a key to bridge cultural differences complemented by knowledge sharing. The interviewees felt that interpersonal trust is a strong base for inter-organizational trust, and that especially from the SME’s point of view, interpersonal trust is something very crucial for working with a partner outside the company. Furthermore, it was stated that a trustful relationship is easier to build with a smaller company than with a larger one, but that it is also easier to quit the relationship if necessary.
**United Kingdom**

Flexibility, lower costs and the possibility to obtain higher quality are the main reasons to offshore/outsource for British SMEs.

Different expectations of work attitudes (e.g. with Russia) have led to misunderstandings and disappointments. A high educational level is perceived as important for mutual understanding. Business objectives should always be clearly understood, too, because this is a good point for trust development. Within the company cultural diversity exists and the knowledge how to handle cultural differences is apparent and can be brought into place when talking about o./o. activities.

**Denmark**

Main reasons to offshore/ outsource for the interviewees were cost factors and tapping increased competences from offshoring/outsourcing partners. Given its size, Denmark and its companies do have global business ties. The interviewees referred to the offshoring/outsourcing activities to countries such as China or Ukraine. Also, outsourcing within Denmark happens frequently.

The expert had experienced that one of the main problems in outsourcing is the non-alignment of decisions with corporate strategy. Inadequate preparation and a certain naivety to do and expect the same abroad as from the home market is prevailing. Companies underestimate cultural differences because they think they can’t af-
fect them. Not only do they have self-imposed constraints but also limitations coming from the country’s infrastructure.

Trust and preparation are important things to consider when deciding to offshore/outsource. Especially the latter implies the integration of corporate strategy with o./o. decisions.

**Sweden**

Reasons for o./o. were specified as the lack of own competences and an increased flexibility. Limited resources and budget constraints were mentioned as well. Further, outsourcing is used to address a lack of competences.

The main problems with o./o. are related to communication and language issues. Moreover, flexibility and cultural knowledge as well as mutual understanding are considered as important. Interviewees stated that an open mind is required too and that partners should act honestly and transparent. All in all a good preparation is required when getting in contact with partners from different cultural backgrounds.

**Summary of the results**

The aforementioned interviews revealed that the selected companies positively consider o./o. activities when trust has been developed
and when a good preparation for building a relationship with other partners takes place. SMEs’ o./o. activities are aiming at closing the gap of lacking competences in the own company. O./o. activities require a good preparation in terms of taking into account cultural differences on an individual as well as on company level. Language plays a significant role in this context.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the levels of trust between parties involved in a relationship are of high importance. SMEs do not benefit from being very formal with partners. Informalities helps an SME to build and to maintain a trustful relationship with the other SME. In this context it becomes of importance to relate the own cultural background to the target culture of people involved as well as to take a company’s history into account. Additionally, no opportunistic behavior was highlighted and could be found.

**Discussion**

Our intension was to find out whether SMEs can bridge cultural differences in their offshore activities. Our findings revealed that SMEs across the five selected countries consider trustful relationships as an important key for their o./o. activities.

According to Child et al. (2005), trust is a complex phenomenon that can be examined through cost-benefit relationships, mu-
tual understanding and development of friendship. Furthermore, trust can be perceived on three levels: calculative trust, understanding and personal identification. Calculative trust is trust on the level of expectations about costs and benefits whereas understanding is related to knowledge-based trust based on perceived similarities between partners. The personal identification is a social aspect that develops over time and is based on cultural affinity by people involved (Child et al. 2005).

However, it was found that misunderstandings and missing respect for cultural differences can lead to increased costs and disappointments. Devos et al. (2009) laid out that also knowledge retention and sustainable competitive advantage are not necessarily achieved when the relationship exists. Returns or promises (money, contract) that are not achieved can negatively influence a trustful relationship and are important criteria in the decision to o./o. and for the selection process of potential partners. It is also important to take into account that trust can have different levels in different contexts as outlined by Janowicz and Noorderhaven (2006).

Beside the trust factor, flexibility was also mentioned as being important which is in-line with what Hätönen and Eriksson (2009) found. Thus, informality in working methods is a plus. Flexibility in the o./o. process allows for choosing the most suitable partners for a particular activity.
Since o./o. decisions and experiences of SMEs in Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden are generally influenced by cultural differences, our research illuminated that a good preparation for a partnership influences o./o. activities too. According to Devos et al. (2009), in a relationship between a vendor and a principal it might occur that three factors have additionally an influence on the relationship quality: goal differences, risk behavior differences and information asymmetry.

With regard to our hypotheses, we can summarize that an SME owner/manager can more easily build up a good relationship with business partners than a manager of a large company when it comes to the relationship quality and its core element trust. Taking into account that we have some snapshots based on 16 interviews our first hypothesis “The quality of relationships among SMEs seems to be more dependent on the level of informality than is the case among large enterprises” is confirmed. As we have outlined in our paper, trust is the element in each relationship and therefore, the second and the third hypotheses “Trust is the essence of building relationships and Trust can be developed and managed and bridges cultural differences are confirmed, too.

Hypothesis number four “SMEs are intrinsically better qualified for building trust and relationships” is also confirmed. A good preparation and management of cultural differences, using trust as a
crux of the matter, can be considered as a starting point for business opportunities.

**Conclusions**

Although much research has been done on trust in o./o. activities, there has been little on specifics in the behavior of North West European SMEs with Anglo-Saxon SMEs when they start o./o. activities and in the resulting performance. With our study we extend the knowledge of trust in relationships among SMEs with different governance and cultural backgrounds. The development of trust and therefore the relationship quality level requires commitment of partners involved. The opportunity of o./o. activities for SMEs is a chance to stay competitive in the market and to sustain existing businesses. On the other hand, SMEs need to be aware of the risks (misunderstandings, disappointments, money, plagiarism) they take in the o./o. processes. Thus, a good preparation is a must in this context. Furthermore, we can conclude that, although SMEs under consideration might have different governance approaches, all SMEs highlighted the importance of trust in a relationship with regard to o./o. activities.

There are some limitations associated with our research. First, the 16 interviews gave us only a snap shot about the complex phenomenon trust in o./o. activities. Moreover, the majority of selected companies was from the Northern European area. Another
A limitation was to find companies outside the IT world who are o./o. or who had done those activities and could refer to experience. Our study was a cross sectional study and therefore, a replication of the study is needed to see companies’ development and to draw further conclusions from those findings.

Practical implications/recommendations

As part of bridging cultural differences in o./o. activities, partners have to search for a common ground of communication. Partners should consider verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as the interpretation of meaning and adequacy of words. Partners with different native languages need to agree on a common language that fits for communication and understanding. If the chosen language is not the native language for at least one party, make an assessment (language test) if the language is sufficiently mastered and whether a translator might be a solution. The process begins before contracting the o./o. partner and continues during the relationship.

Partners need to ensure that the risks of o./o., including the quality of the o./o. partner and its activities, are under control. All potential internal and external risks of o./o. activities and their consequences such as increased costs, lower quality, and added time should be compared to the magnitude of the benefit the offshore company seeks.
SMEs should choose the o./o. partner that promises the most benefits while posing the least risks. That includes educational standards, laws and regulations, cost efficiency, production speed, quality and expertise. This must be done in the initial stage and facilitates the decision whether or not to offshore.

**Future research**

This paper is a starting point for more research on the element of trust in relationships in which cultural differences need to be bridged. In this regard, the influence of culture can be subject to a more in-depth investigation with different countries. The countries under investigation can be analyzed separately and with a larger sample size.

The research explored the ideas, thoughts and experiences of companies’ representatives and measured qualitative data. Therefore, future research may take an approach that takes more quantitative data into consideration to complement qualitative outcomes. Additionally, organizational culture may play an important role too in the relationship development when companies with an Anglo-Saxon and a Northern-European approach are under investigation. In the entire context of trust and relationships, one might think about how to measure trust. Of course one can ask people about trust or one can measure trust by a so-called trust game or investment game (Fetchenhauer and Dunning 2009). However, in business settings
with different cultural backgrounds, it is even more interesting to 
measure trust at an objective level.

Finally, the study how relationships are managed best by ei-
ther SMEs or large firms and if there are significant differences 
would require more data that includes comparative experience and 
insights gained by larger firms.
References


