

## **Factors of Relationship Marketing In Creating Leadership**

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### **Structured Abstract:**

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to identify what factors are of the greatest importance to relationship marketing in creating leadership and to identify what factors are of the greatest importance in each stage of relationship marketing. This research employs an analysis for the literature review to identify factors of relationship marketing in creating leadership. Then a series of 20 expert interviews from five case studies were conducted to illustrate the importance of these factors at each stage of business relationships. The findings identify the high-order factors of business relationship and demonstrate the role of relationships in leadership creation, acting as the main strategy to improve business. This research has important implications for different level managers at companies. By understanding the factors that are most important at each stage, managers can focus their efforts on these dimensions in order to foster successful buyer–seller relationships in creating leaders. This is one of few studies that investigate factors of buyer-seller relationships at each stage of relationship marketing. To our knowledge, this is one of few paper that attempts to providing empirical evidence of the role of relationship marketing in creation business leaders.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, leadership, qualitative context.

**Keywords** – Relationship marketing, Leadership, Qualitative context, Developing country.

**Article Classification:** Research paper

## **1. Introduction**

Calls have been made for increased adoption of useful perspectives in the sphere of relationship marketing (Wilson, 1995; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006; Achim & Thomas, 2003; Hsu et al., 2008; Gabriel & Oni, 2012; Lindgreen et al., 2012) to enhance leader's performance and achieve a more understanding of buyer seller relationships in forming new structures that do not exist in isolation in businesses. To date, there has been very little empirical investigation of how managers perceive the wider objective and orientation of leadership, and within this, the extent to which calls for the adoption of critical role of relationship marketing approaches are being heeded. These issues are important not only for their impact on how buyer-seller relationship is presented externally as a dyad, but also for their reflection of how leader's creation within business stages for better marketing relationships. The research reported here sought to provide insights into these important issues under the context of various businesses in Jordan. In fact, our focus in the present research is on two key questions. The first question is "how do key dimensions of marketing relationship influence leadership in a business", and the second question is "how does leader's relationship within stages of relationship marketing perceive the discipline of marketing itself.

The research is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a review of marketing relationship and business leadership literature is undertaken. Section 3 presents the research methodology. In Section 4, findings and discussions are provided and highlighted the core concept, leadership. The last section includes conclusions and clarifies contributions; the conceptual framework for relationship marketing: key for business leadership.

## 2. Literature Review

Parker *et al.* (2006) define a relationship marketing as a complex set of factors (e.g. trust and commitment), which are used as an antecedent and or performance outcome. Relationships are important in understanding a business link between managers (e.g. leaders) in a business (McLoughlin & Horan, 2002; Hsu et al., 2008; Nichols, 2009; Almansour, 2012). Leaders also need to get an attention in order to gain information sharing and collaboration with their staff and stakeholders to move forward on execute decisions in a productive and timely fashion (Harris and Ogbonna, 2001; Nichols, 2009; Irawanto et al., 2012). Many studies often concentrates on many factors to explain business relationships, such as trust, commitment, cooperation, collaboration, communication, information sharing, relationship quality, technology, and satisfaction (Wilson, 1995; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006; Dash et al., 2007).

Previous studies have emphasized a number of similar dimensions which have contributed to business leaders in increasing their working partnerships. Most of the studies' authors (e.g. Piercy *et al.*, 1997; Bentona & Maloni, 2005; Hsu et al., 2008; Lindgreen et al., 2012) use these dimensions to explore different concepts on the relationship perspective. They mainly provide definitions for underpinning a relationship as a link of processes for both individuals and business engaging in several exchanges, networks and horizontal and vertical integrations to improve business' performance. These processes are dimensions (e.g., Perrien & Ricard, 1995; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006) in the relationship, which work as conditions to create better achievements for the firms. A business relationship is considered as a key unit in the business complexity, which involves the different processes for better business and performance. In the management of business leaders, a marketing relationship forms a long-term bond encouraging mutual visions, mutual planning, efficiency, and sharing of information (e.g., Wilson 1995; Bentona & Maloni 2005; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006, Hills, 2014). These processes have drawn attention to the fact that relationships connect business leaders throughout relationship management and information sharing binds them to drive their effective relationships for better financial and non- financial performance (Perrien & Ricard, 1995; Hsu et al. 2008). Leaders are linked to key traits such as curiosity, courage, perseverance, personal ethics, and confidence that create challenges for developing the generation of leadership in the various functions in a business (Kambil, 2010). Managers as leaders can use their integrated framework to determine the impact of dynamic factors, such as executive leadership, and the specific context of product to do better business in the market (lindgreen et al., 2012). It is also important for leaders to consistent with how the brain works in order to creates efficiency, productivity and better performance (Taylor & Campbell, 2011; Hills, 2014).

Researchers have argued that the business relationship is a prerequisite for success alongside well-managed processes in creation of business leadership (e.g. Wilson, 1995; Hughes, 1999; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006; Dash et al., 2007). This emphasis upgrades business relationships from a personal short-term level to a strategic long-term level and that should be understood as a business revelation where the key unit of analysis for a leadership concept is a business relationship. Indeed, many studies have been investigated in order to explain the business relationship. It has been our mission as researchers to highlight the concept of leadership and its link with the various dimensions of business relationships. Table 1 includes classifications from previous studies for the most important factors “dimensions” of the relationship including the focus of this research which is the dimension of business leadership. According to Wong and Sohal (2006), Lindgreen et al., (2012) and Simões and Mason (2012), the business relationship can create different benefits to both the staff at an organization and buyers and sellers in businesses, including dimensions such as communication, information and timely decision-making for leader in their strategies. However, the previous research has not covered all issues related to relationships, and business leadership has not been explored in a full picture from the perspective of relationship marketing. Business leadership is considered a critical factor and we should provide more exploration to understand leadership in providing better business performance.

**Table 1.** Relationship Marketing: The Dimension of Leadership

Research	Dimensions of Relationship Marketing												
	Trust	Commitment	Communication	Cooperation	Product Quality	Information Quality	Skills & Training	Technology Support	Personal Relationship	Social Network	Business Network	Policy Making	Leadership
Wilson (1995)	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*		*	
Butler (1999)	*	*	*		*	*			*	*	*		
Lee & Wong (2001)	*	*		*	*		*	*	*		*	*	
Kwon & Su (2004)	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*				
Wong & Sohal (2006)	*	*	*		*	*			*	*		*	
Faria-Fernandes et al. (2009)					*	*		*					
Dash et al. (2007)	*	*	*	*	*		*		*			*	
Cheng et al. (2008)		*	*			*	*	*		*	*		
Zuniga-Arias et al. (2009)	*		*	*	*				*				*
Carmignani (2009)	*	*	*	*	*	*							*
Baird et al. (2011)					*	*			*		*	*	
Talib et al. (2011)	*	*		*	*		*		*				*
Holschbach and Hofmann (2011)	*			*	*	*				*			
Golji (2011)	*		*		*	*	*		*		*		*

In relationship marketing, there is a complementary need of theoretical development for the relationship's dimensions. It is our note that there is an overlapping among these dimensions in studying relationship marketing and most of the prior research has lunched the same key dimensions such as trust, commitment, communication, product quality, information quality, and personal relationship. Few researches has explored important factors such as the dimension of leadership in business and also this research has failed to empirically examine leadership in detail amongst the stages of relationship marketing. In fact, the above discussion on relationship marketing sheds the lens on key research questions that are our focus in the present research. The first question is "how do key dimensions of marketing relationship influence leadership in a business", and the second question is "how does leader's relationship within stages of marketing relationship perceive the discipline of marketing itself. For the purpose of the current research more, table 2 provides definitions for the dimensions of relationship marketing.

**Table 2. Definitions: Dimensions of Relationship Marketing**

Dimension	Definition	Supporting Research
<b>Trust</b>	- A set of positive feelings and thinking from two sides in a business.	Wilson, 1995
<b>Commitment</b>	-A willingness of the business members to put effort and resources into their trusting business.	Dash et al., 2007
<b>Communication</b>	-A means of information exchange between business partners using social and technical ways.	Butler,1999
<b>Cooperation</b>	-A set of coordination that leads for joint planning and problem solving for collaboration in the future in a business.	Holschbach and Hofmann (2011)
<b>Product Quality</b>	-Identifications of the product exchanged in a business, including standards, safety issues, and micro-macro issues.	Faria-Fernandes et al., 2009
<b>Information Quality</b>	-Identification of information shared in a business, including information content, sources, methods, and value.	Chopra and Meindl, 2001
<b>Training and Skills</b>	- A set of know-how in a business to support managers in doing their functions and achieving their goals.	Mavondo and Rodrigo, 2001
<b>Technology Support</b>	A tool of support systems in a business using technology or software to communicate and share information for better decisions.	Wilson, 1995
<b>Personal Relationship</b>	-A relation between people, seen as a prerequisite for most information exchanges.	Poppo and Zenger, 2002
<b>Social Network</b>	-An interaction with others through events and social activities in a business	Ritter, 1999
<b>Business Network</b>	-An interaction with others through formal and informal business activities.	Anderson et al., 1994
<b>Policy Making</b>	-A group of regulations formulated to provide guidelines in a business.	Baird et al, 2011
<b>Leadership</b>	-The ability of a manager to direct the business (staff and customers) for better performance.	Almansour , 2012

These dimensions of relationship marketing are higher-order factors such as trust, commitment, cooperation, communication, product quality, and personal relationship. Some of studies have studies leadership (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Tapp & Hughes, 2008; Panagopoulos & Dimitriadis, 2009), and we argue that without leadership as the basis for business relationship, marketing would be a hard mission in order to manage quality performance. For underpinning understanding, this research focuses on the stages of relationship marketing in order to present the effect level of each dimension at each stage in the relationship. Borys and Jemison (1989) and Ritter (1999) explained that organizational arrangements can use resources and/or governance structures from more than one existing organization in order to link a range of organizational forms making it difficult to define and analyze hybrids precisely.

According to Wilson (1995) and Powers and Reagan (2007), the framework of relationship includes the following stages: (A) selection of the business partner, (B) defining the relationship purpose (C) setting the boundaries of the relationship, (D) value creation, (E) relationship maintenance. We follow this five stage model. The stage of partner selection is a way to search partners and provide awareness for the leading business or a feasible exchange partner. Partner selection is the procedure in which the firm acknowledges promising partners and conclusively selects an appropriate firm (Wilson, 1995). During the searching selection for a partner the firm must investigate businesses that have the compatible skills, performance satisfaction, capabilities and trust that empower them to meet the short and long-term goals of the company searching the partnership (Badaracco, 1991; Powers & Reagan, 2007). In many instances, buyers and sellers need to highlight the purpose of their business link (Wilson, 1995). Defining purpose demonstrates the phase in which both parties interact with each other to discuss their mutual goals, their collaboration, benefits of any available technology, and their outlook toward the progress of the leading relationship. When defining the purpose of the relationship it assists the parties to analyze their bilateral objectives, these objectives will lead them to the right track and improve their business as leaders. (Weiss & Jap, 1995; Wilson, 1995). They need to identify issues and agreements as powerful and compelling.

The whole idea from creating and keeping their relationship is in having fair value for both partners along with a maintenance strategy for their relationship on the long-term business. Setting relationship boundaries outlines the input and capital accessible to build significance in the relationship (Wilson, 1995; Powers & Reagan, 2007). Within this stage, partners become progressively interdependent on the resources and benefits that originated from the partnering firm. (Dwyer et al., 1987; Ganesan, 1994). Creating relationship value is when the potentials and

capabilities of the partners are collaborated in order to improve their competitive advantage and balances value for relationship partners. (Wilson, 1995). Relationship maintenance presents the step where the partners have optimistically reached a level of satisfaction which may dismiss all other possible exchange partners (Powers and Reagan, 2007), for supreme optimization of their competitive positions.

Understanding and maintaining relationships enables business players to be more aware of the effects of leadership, which gives rise to better performance with fair added value for various partners. Overall, the relationship dimensions and the stages have been highlighted. Some of the dimensions that will be mentioned later in a new conceptual framework have been shown in the literature. There has been a lack of detailed studied on the concept of leadership, which narrows the understanding of the relationship marketing advantages for business' partners. The present research will therefore attempt to combine the high-order dimensions in a novel conceptual framework.

### **3. Research Methodology**

An exploratory research is applied as our philosophy. Five cases are selected from various business sectors, using a case study strategy in order to examine potential similarities and differences amongst the cases. This is to explore the application of the stages of relationship marketing for the identified dimensions. A triangulation method is adopted as a corroboratory mode to ensure results are more convincing and involved multiple sources of data collection and analysis to prevent subjective bias (Miles & Huberman; 1994). This research has focused on business partners to highlight more results from the wide interactions amongst business relationships and their networks.

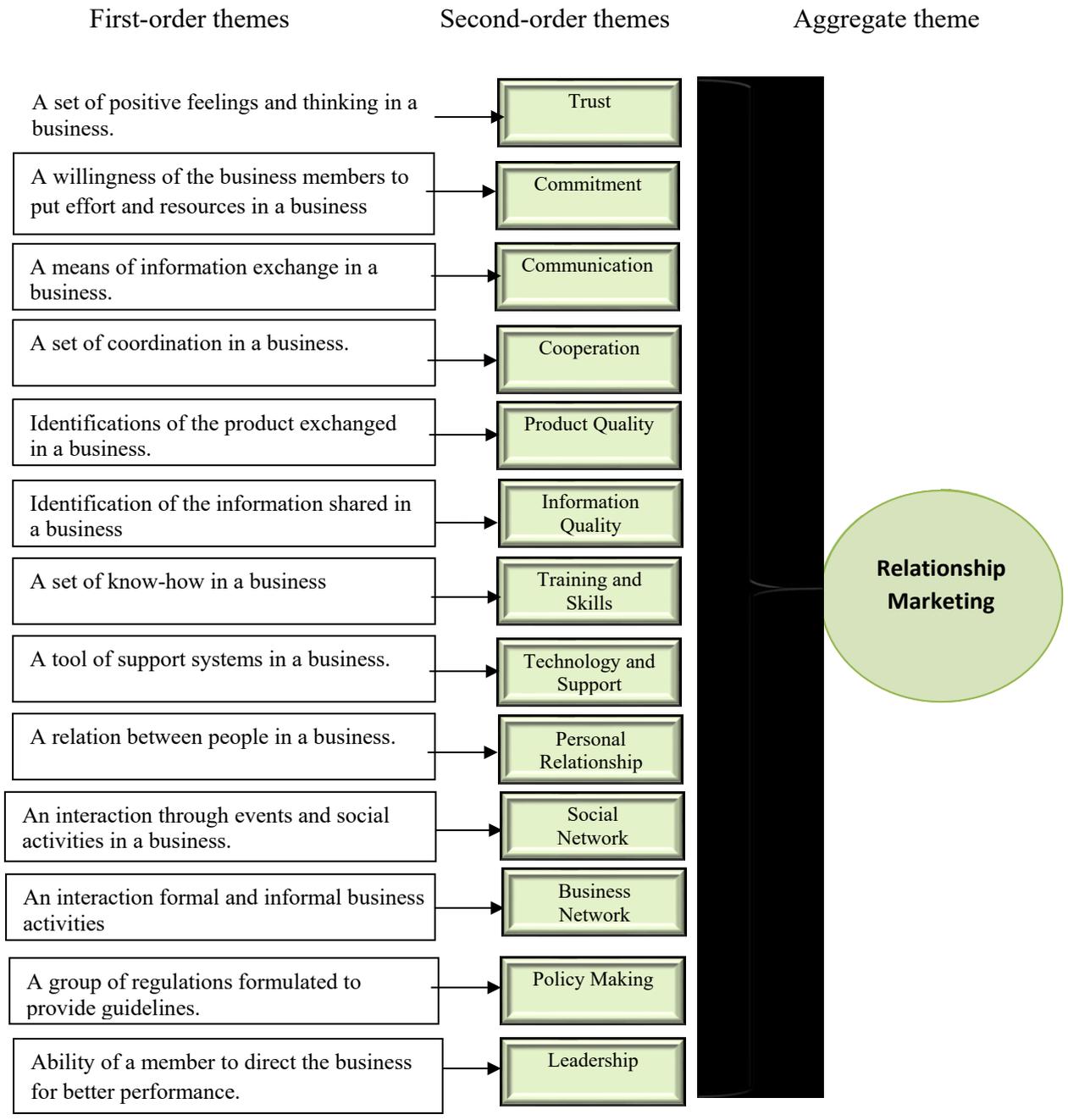
The researchers used semi-structured interviews and focus group techniques, and these were conducted with the five firms focusing on dyadic relationships in Amman in 2014. Observations were also made by attending meetings with different level managers. Secondary data technique was applied in this research, using reports, company websites, historical data and previous agreements. The chosen organizations represented various sectors in businesses of: Case 1/telecommunication, Cases 2/university, Case 3/cement factory, Case 4/logistics and Case 5/construction (Table 3). The organizations reflected involving in many business relationships and contribute in leading their sectors. The researchers followed their wide experiences to adopt a self-selection technique in order to identify non-probability sampling. A sample size of organizations were chosen to have high response rates, and replication logic was also used to validate and cross-check the information and explore themes within the industry (Miles & Huberman,1994; Perry, 1998, ).

**Table 3.** Classification of Cases

<b>Case</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Customers</b>
<b>Case1/Telecommunication</b>	2 top managers, middle manager, and first-line manager	1000	Amman	1994	4000000
<b>Cases 2/University</b>	2 academic managers (faculty dean), 2 academic managers (department chair)	2000	Amman	1962	45000
<b>Case 3/Cement factory</b>	2 top managers, middle manager, and first-line manager	850	Amman	1951	-
<b>Case 4/Logistics</b>	Owner, top manager, middle managers, and first-line manager	100	Amman	2005	1000
<b>Case 5/Construction</b>	Owner, top manager, middle managers, and first-line manager	50	Amman	2010	200

Interviews were the primary data collection method using open-ended questions (Yin, 2007). Four partners of owners, top managers, middle managers, and first-line managers were reached to conduct the interviews for each case. The interviews consisted of information of the interviewee description, the organizations, the various dimensions of relationships and the leadership concept. The approach of focus group was also used with a group of managers for each case. This research followed an iterative procedure of moving backward and forward in time in order to know further the situation of business relationships and especially the leadership analysis. All interviews and focus group discussion were tape-recorded in order to better analysis. The method of thematic analysis was mainly used to analysis the collected data and texts via a conceptual network for the main themes and sub-themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). For the focus group, summarizing and categorizing key dimensions of associations were also followed (Saunders et al., 2007).

The first step of analysis was that the interview transcripts and the focus group feedbacks and other sources were analyzed using coding for data reduction and data displays for each case study. Coding followed an initial list of codes and was developed based on the categories that emerged as relevant from the literature review. The selected themes in each case were ended up into themes that are specific to be non-repetitive and a manageable set of significant themes in order to facilitate the final display for findings. The researchers asked one of the managers at each case to provide confirmations on the draft report of findings in order to ensure content validity and research reliability. The second step of analysis involved the techniques of cross-case comparisons in order to provide first-order concepts, consolidating categories into second-order themes, identifying aggregate theme underlying theoretical categories and highlighting how these might relate to each other. Following this technique, one researcher identified similar themes and interactions across case studies and drew on extant literature for refinement. The other researcher provided an outsider perspective to assess reliability for the highlighted interactions and themes (Figure 1). In a nutshell, the above method of analysis provided a sequence of steps for logical contributions in building a conceptual framework for the role of relationship marketing in business leadership.



**Figure 1.** A Structure of Cross-Case Comparison

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

The findings of each case are discussed based on the key themes. Each case is explored and analyzed from the view of both sides to gain full-understanding of the dyadic relationships. These findings extend factor and internal validity and the research examined whether explorations and of the conceptual factors and their interrelationships were credible and reliable for each case including the business relationships and their stages. There are underpinning supports of leadership concept that can be explained by using the perspective of relationship marketing. This perspective is essential in understanding the importance of an exchange link between two firms or two actors (e.g. leaders and followers) (Wilson, 1995; McLoughlin & Horan, 2002; Taylor & Campbell, 2011). Conceptual and empirical models often focus on components of the relationship marketing with similar key theoretical dimensions to explain exchange behavior (Wilson, 1995; Bass, 1997). Once it talks about how leaders maintain their position through a series of tacit exchange agreements with their members, it creates social exchange and relationship perspectives (Conger et al., 2000; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006). In defining leadership it says that a transforming effect on both leaders and followers for better performance, including communication and personal relationship (Wilson, 1995; Bass, 1997). According to Bass (1997) and Lindgreen et al., (2012), leaders develop relationships with their business followers that go beyond pure economic and trust. Importantly, relationship marketing has been explained in terms of the key dimensions (e.g. trust, commitment, communication, cooperation, product quality, information quality, training and skills, technology and support, personal relationship, social network, business network) to understand why staff and consumers enter into such leading relationships.

The concept of leadership could be created amongst the key dimensions of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hughes et al., 1999; Jung & Avolio, 2000). The findings generate a pool of themes linked to central themes in building relationship marketing. Examining of dimensions of relationships across the five cases revealed three overarching patterns. (A) The findings provided dimensions of relationship marketing were in some cases more managerial-focused, while in other cases more interaction-focused. (B) Leadership dimension was found more used in most cases where it was more interaction-focused in few cases. (C) The research identified what factors are of the greatest importance in stages of relationship marketing.

The key dimensions such as trust, commitment, communication, cooperation, product quality, information quality, training and skills, technology and support, personal relationship, social network, business network, and leadership were identified across the five cases. In cases 1, 2, and 3 these dimensions appeared more managerial-focused, while in cases 4 and 5 they highlighted as more

interaction-focused. In cases 1, 2, and 3, the dimensions were more managerial-focused where all managers highlighted the need to follow systematic approach in management and dealing with their staff and also customers in order to lead and keep their organization from any changeable actions or performance. The top manager in Case 1 said:

*“...leader behavior draws upon both owner’s beliefs and positive managerial capacities, to foster greater self-awareness and others management..... it is all about how you understand the strategies and owner’s needs and then apply them as orders for your staff.....if you can do that so you are a leader and others follow you.....” (Case 1)*

Conceptualization of relationships was a high process of many dimensions, including leadership concept. This also joined the league of researchers that viewed leaders were not ethically neutral and this was their application for others approaches in their management and not their own creativity. The academic manager in Case 2 explained:

*“....it is my feeling that any theory of leadership development, but particularly one focused on managerial aspects, will be incomplete and misguided if it does not contribute to better awareness and attention to the inherent ethical responsibilities that reside in the leadership role of the manager....” (Case 2)*

The idea of using dimensions of relationship was to make better performance, and one of these dimensions should be leadership existing to achieve high level of authenticity through values and management-awareness to encourage other to do their missions and activities and at the same time acting in congruence with those values and beliefs while relating in a transparent and authentic way with cohorts. The middle manager in Case 3 explained:

*“....it is our mission as management to focus on our relationship including cooperation, communication and personal relationship....but before you are a leader, and success is all about growing your managerial style. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others under your organization rules...” (Case 3)*

Leadership is required to solve many situations and also when there is difference in the required performance. It is the role of the leader to communicate and commitment, to provide social and business networks, and to interact with policy makers. It is the leader mission to fix the relationships and bring success to the business. The owner in Case 4 highlighted:

*“... We just have to get them into the relationship practices if we want to be first in market. I am sure that we need to focus on management style in leading but more on self-creativity with holistic interaction with others to let them follow.....” (Case 4)*

The dimensions of relationship marketing were more interaction-focused, managers described the need to have these dimensions to foster and lead long-term planning and control over staff and customers in terms of whole decisions. The owner in case 5 argued:

*All dimensions are important and keys....but my definition of leadership is the capacity and the will to rally both staff and customers to a common purpose and joint benefits and the character which inspires confidence and self-interaction.....” (Case 5)*

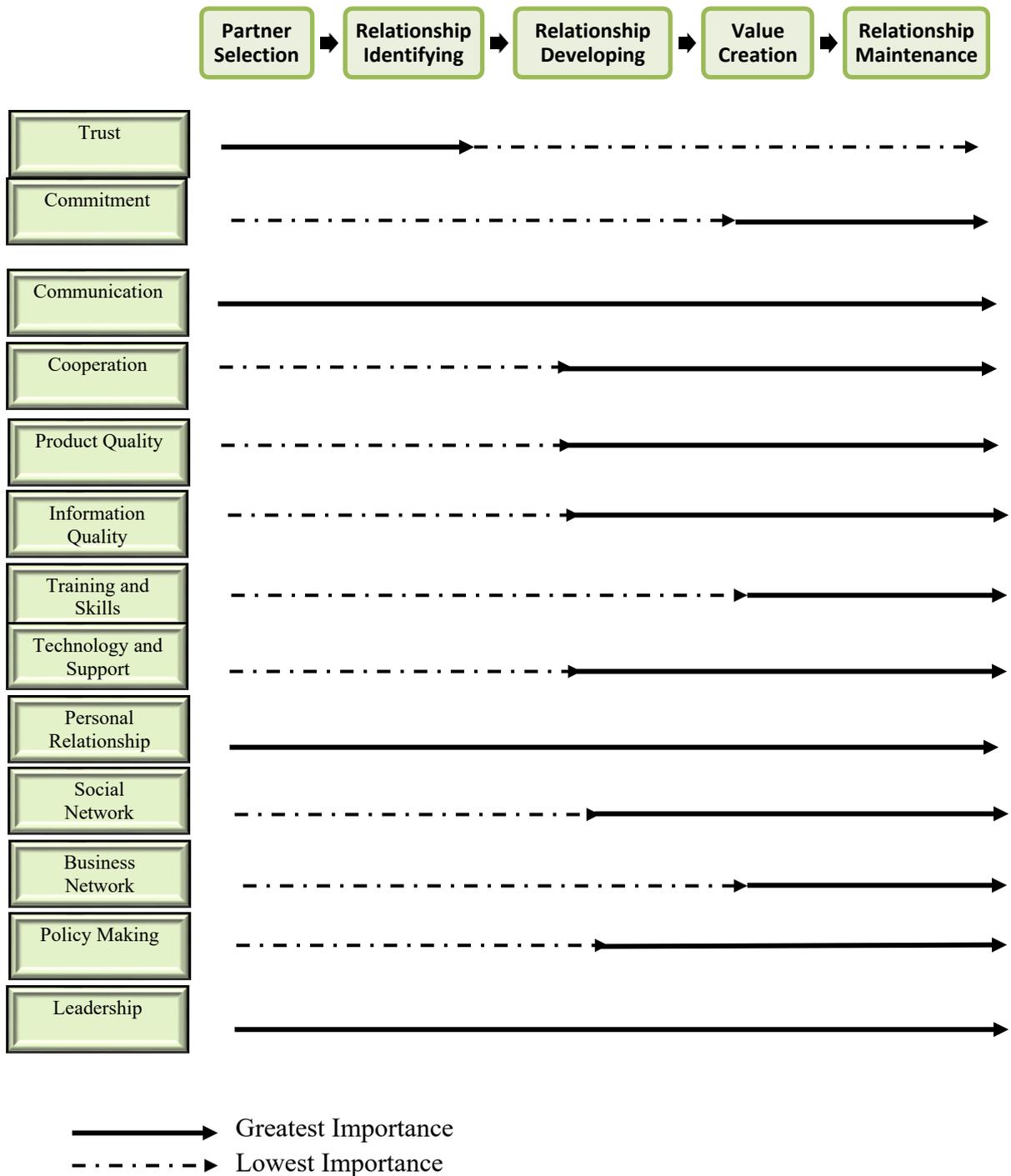
As a result, our analysis revealed that most cases focused on dimensions of relationship marketing and more on leadership as a core dimension. Managers in these relationships seemed interested in how leadership is fostering both managers and business performance. Importantly, most cases focused more on managerial directions on creating leaders, and focused much less emphasis on interaction directions on creating leaders. Interestingly, all cases shared and agreed on the importance of leadership in providing better company (leaders and staff) - customer relationships and then better financial and non-financial performance. All cases highlighted the fact that having a successful business relationship need to follow specific stages (e.g. Wilson, 1995; Powers & Reagan, 2007): partner selection, relationship identifying (purpose), relationship developing (boundaries), value creation, and relationship maintenance. The cases-cross comparisons are illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Cases-Cross Comparisons–Dimensions of Relationship Marketing

Case	<i>Dimensions of Relationship Marketing</i>	
	<i>Managerial-Focused</i>	<i>Interaction-Focused</i>
<b>Case 1</b>	<p>“.... I think when our business relationship was created it included many factors such as cooperation, technology sharing, policy and many....but also how to leadership is part of our management strategy...” (Top manager)</p> <p>“leadership is an important concept in our management philosophy ... to be brought about by sharing the right steps with our top managers before taking actions” (Middle line manager)</p>	<p>“... it is more creativity to interact with other based on your own concept about leading others and situations... it is better to use many factors in relationships such as personal relationship, social networks, trust and other to create partners and customer loyalty..... (First line manager)</p>
<b>Case 2</b>	<p>“Staff needs a leader, but we offer them that based on agreed steps and way of leadership with the coming leader ..it is totally managerial step.....” (Faculty Dean 1 )</p> <p>“... ..I have learned that some staff have changed their way of doing works because their belief this is required from the high manager levels and not from the direct manager “leader” ....(Dep. Chair 1)</p>	<p>“We have close relationships with our facult staff, which leads to good trust and commitment... it is our interaction and personal contact to bond with them .. it is the way they can believe in us and follow our message....” (Dep. Chair 2)</p>
<b>Case 3</b>	<p>“I do all these dimensions at our factory because our top management tells us that... it is systematic style of management... we lead based on orders, and business network and cooperation created by this type of management and relationships.....” (Top manager)</p> <p>“....customers and partners prefer to follow fixed system and because that we create leaders of fixed system to keep the same level of customers.. it is our belief that leadership is made and not born.....”(Middle line manager)</p>	<p>“.....we need to tell our staff and employees and also regular customers that we have special interaction with everyone based on everyone needs and way of thinking... it is our believe that this community of manger-staff-customer relationships is unique and require high flexibility” (First line manager)</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Case 4</b></p>	<p><i>“ I say that the wrong relationship which follows leadership myth of that leaders are born-that there is a genetic factor to leadership. I say there is nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. We provide and tell what is the managers should be like ..... (Top manager)</i></p> <p><i>Customers need a well-managed relationship ...which means well-managed dimensions .....such as leadership dimension... it is all about management style in advance .....” (First line manager)</i></p>	<p><i>“it is truly that authentic leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is all about results and final fair performance and not attributes in position.... (Middle line manager)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Case 5</b></p>	<p><i>“.....it is really important to understand the stages of any relationship at our company...how to select your staff and also your customer and end users, it is all about how to lead things to work for make a success story.... Leadership is a great concept that we need to make and manage.... “ (Owner)</i></p> <p><i>“it is strongly understood that we need to select right partners then develop our relationship with them then maintain this link together... this needs good communication, cooperation, networking and also decision makers for better leadership in the market.....”(Middle line manager)</i></p>	<p><i>“.....we have no choice: leadership is not simply the quantity or quality of individual leaders that determines organizational success, but the ability of formal and informal leaders to pull together in the support of organizational goals that ultimately makes the difference and real interaction”. (Top manager)</i></p>

In relationship marketing, leadership starts with individuals in leadership positions, but this does not stop there in organizations (Ganesan, 1994; Bass 1997). This is because those organizations are not able to link their objectives just with a single great leader, or even upon the organization's chain of command. Leadership is reflection for both the leaders themselves and the relationships among them and with their staff and also with their customers. This should be at various stages and times from the stage of identifying actors (e.g. staff at the organization, partners with the organization, and customers of the organization) to the stage of maintaining the business interactions and also continuation in organization-customer relationship. Therefore the research highlighted the fact that we need to identify the links of leadership concept and other dimensions at each stage of relationship marketing. Figure 3 shows the links of leadership at stages of a relationship.



**Figure 2.** Stages of Relationship Marketing

The stages of relationships are five stages which should have interactions and management amongst the partners in the relationships “dyads”. The findings identified the effects of 13 dimensions

(including leadership) through which one is the greatest important factor in each stage. The findings revealed that the three dimensions: leadership, personal relationship, and communication are greatest important factors in all stages. More importantly, that personal relationship and communication as social exchanges are both part of the leadership process (Bass, 1997). One dimension namely trust is the greatest factor in the first two stages of relationship marketing (partner selection and relationship identifying). Six dimensions of cooperation, product quality, information quality, technology and support, social networks, and policy making are the greatest factors in the last three stages (relationship developing, value creation, and relationship maintenance). Three dimensions namely commitment, training and skills, and business network are the greatest factors in the last two stages (value creation and relationship maintenance).

In many instances, organizations and leaders need to pay more attention on the purpose of their business link by identifying partners including managerial issues and interactional agreements as powerful tool (e.g. Wilson 1995; Bass,1997; Jung & Avolio, 2000; Powers & Reagent, 2007). The leaders need to think about keeping their relationship by creating value for partners (between leaders and their staff and between the organization and its customers) along with a maintenance strategy for long-term relationships in a business.

## **5. Conclusions and Contributions**

The findings of the current research have a number of implications for both theory and practice. The current research has identified 12 dimensions as the greatest importance to relationship marketing in creating leadership and also identified which one of the dimensions is of the greatest importance in each stage of relationship marketing. This research advances conceptual works (e.g. Wilson 1995; Bass,1997; Eiriz & Wilson, 2006; Powers & Reagan, 2007) which have focused on the relationship marketing components with the evidence of literature. Previous works focused on many relationship dimensions but did not highlight the importance of leadership concept. These works attempt to ground discussion on an appropriate theoretical base in marketing, but didn't link leadership to relationship marketing at the levels of managerial and interactional focus. This research has resulted in the main proposition that leadership is a core in the whole process of business relationship and this concept has direct and indirect effects from the various dimensions of relationship marketing. The authors have integrated the various theoretical links to propose a framework of relationship marketing and leadership creation. This integrated framework focused on managerial focused; following top management and step by step strategies, and interaction focused; following core self-awareness and self-regulation components of authentic leadership. Figure 3 shows the novel framework.



**Figure 3.** A Novel Framework of Relationship Marketing: Key for Business Leadership

Important empirical evidence for managers have been provided as that most of the relationship factors identified in the literature do vary in importance in the five stages of relationship marketing. Leaders and relationship partners should focus more on those factors that are greatest important during the stages. This is an important implication of the research as managers may place too much importance on certain things with the wrong partner at the wrong time. The fresh findings can be used as a basis for additional research. This research was based on data from managers evaluating both side of a dyad. Future investigation is suggested to reverse this process by examining both side of a dyad or a partner's chain. The informants explained the stages of relationship marketing based on a definition of that stage. Future research could use multiple item scales or quantitative scale to further explore and verify the stages suggested in the literature. A final research direction could investigate the concept of leadership in relation to types of business performance

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