Virtual Team and Trust Relationship: Focus Group Interviews in Multimedia Super Corridor Status Companies

Norizah Aripin [1], Hasrina Mustafa[2] & Adnan Hussein[3]

noryzah@uum.edu.my[1],hasrina@usm.my[2] & adnan@usm.my[3]

Universiti Utara Malaysia[1]
Universiti Sains Malaysia[2] &[3]

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the trust relationship in virtual teams in Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status companies. The study used qualitative method that is phenomenology approach through focus group interviews. In-depth interview were also used with semi-structured and open-ended questions. The interviews involved six staffs at different position in virtual team (two team leaders, and four team members). The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to the thematic analysis. Results showed that dimensions on virtual team trust relationship including interpersonal communication, personality, team members size, face-to-face meeting needs, safety information when discussing face-to-face in public places, and difficulty to recall interaction via video conferencing with other team members.

Keywords: Virtual Team and Trust Relationship

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of this paper started with the concept of virtual teams

The Concept of Virtual Team

Due to advances in communication technology over the past 30 years, the use of distributed of virtual teams is becoming more common in the modern workplace. The terms 'distributed' and 'virtual' teams interchangeably used to refer to groups of employees who must accomplish their tasks by working with teammates who are physically dispersed. Such teams must rely on a variety of communication technologies to mediate their interactions and enable coordinated effort to occur (Bowers *et al.,* 2009).

Research on virtual teams is still in its nascent stages (Badrinarayanan & Arnett, 2008, Prasad & Akhilesh, 2002) and because of the relative newness of virtual teams, many areas of research have not been examined (Badrinarayanan & Arnett, 2008).

Virtual team is a task-oriented group that can collaborate across time, space, and organizational boundaries by harnessing the power of computer-mediated communication. According to Cragan, Kasch and Wright (2009) virtual team has three major dimensions that are (1) permanent or temporary, (2) virtual interaction mode (balance between computer-mediated communication and face-to-face communication) and (3) small group boundaries (personal, community, and work).

With the rapid development of tools to support collaborative work, there are differences between face-to-face and virtual teams. Virtual teams traditionally means groups of workers who were geographically dispersed and worked away from traditional office space. Recently, the concept of remote and mobile workers and also mobile virtual work have changed as well. Developments in technology continue to redefine the role of time and space, and the office now extends beyond "hard walls and cubicles" to include the airport, the hotel lobby, WIFI hotspots, and the screened-in porch overlooking your backyard (Cragan, Kasch & Wright, 2009).

Communication and information technologies can be used to support teamwork in four different ways (McGrath & Hollingshead, 1994). First, technologies can gather and present information, such as collaborative document management systems and electronic whiteboards. Second, technologies help team members communicate both internally and with outside organizations. Third, information technologies help team process information by providing systems to structure brainstorming, problem-solving, and decision-making activities. Fourth, technologies may be used to structure the group process through meeting agendas, assignment charts, and project management tools.

Virtual teams have adopted a variety of new communication technologies. These new forms team communication include electronic mail (e-mail), voice mail, video conferencing, electronic bulletin boards, and intranets. Technology directly affects work design and communication patterns, as well as secondary social effects caused by the reduced social and organizational cues in the messages (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). The primary goals of virtual teams are to improve task performance, overcome the constraints of time and space on collaboration, and increase the range and speed of access to information (McGrath & Hollingshead, 1994). These goals are related to the direct effects of technology.

Nowadays, virtual team becomes more important in any organizations. Team members maybe collaborate or work with other team members from different locations or countries and maybe also across the different time zones. Team members use communication technologies for working purposes. Thus, communication technologies are the medium for team members to interact and collaborate towards each other.

Types of Virtual Team
According to Edwards and Wilson (2004) types of virtual team divided into three categories that are project teams, service teams, and process teams.

i)   Project Teams

Project teams come together for a finite period of time in responses to a project brief, not necessarily originating from any member of the team. Project teams comprise an intact group of members who stay together for the duration of the project, but who can draw on the skills of other members of the organization without necessarily integrating them into their unit. The team members will probably have formal meetings on predefined basis and then work together in subgroups in the intervals between meetings to complete allocated modules of work. With project virtual teams, the nature of the project can be used to define the skill base that is required, and suitable members can be identified to deliver the objectives. Such a team will have measurable outputs, just like any co-located project team.

ii)   Service Teams

Service teams often exist as a resource on call – maybe across a number locations or countries – for the resolution of problems and for advice. Information technology (IT) support is a typical example. The team is from a single function, and is primarily a support service. Their work and expertise is not usually tailored to the needs of a single organization or location and can be a resource for a number of department, companies and countries. Due to time differences in working hours across locations the virtual team may need to be staffed during abnormal working hours.
        Team members may not work together directly on a regular basis as their attention will be focused on problems and people outside the team itself. Each team member is required to work virtually, using the technology available to them to solve the problem they are presented with. Any work done within the group may be done face-to-face if the service team itself is co-locates for that purposes.

(iii)   Process Teams

Process teams will collaborate over an undefined period to respond to ongoing needs within a certain domain. The group is likely to have fluid membership due to the indefinite nature of the need or process, and people will be called upon depending on the challenges the team is facing at any particular time. The remit of these teams if often broad and their action plan ever-evolving. The nature of their collaboration would depend on the work to be completed.
        An example of a process team in a multinational organization would be a team comprising the managing directors from each market within Europe, whose brief is to continually develop the company's organizational effectiveness. This remit is broad and will require continuous focus for it to be developed and maintained. The team would have a constantly evolving action plan tailored to the team's interpretation of the company's needs at any point in time.

Building Trust in Virtual Team
The key to good communication in a team is trust. For team members to trust, they must believe that team is competent to complete its task (team efficacy) and the team environment is safe for its members (Ilgen *et al.,* 2005). Trust is the expression of confidence in the team relationship; that is, the confidence one has that other team members will honor their commitments (Thompson, 2007). It is built on past experiences, understanding the motives of others, and a willingness to believe in others. Trust within a team encourages communication and cooperation and makes conflicts easier to resolve.

Trust evolves from shared values, attitudes, and emotions (Jones & George, 1998). Individual tend to trust people who share our value, and people who are trustworthy tend to trust others more. Trust is also based on the attitudes that people form about one another. Trust also affected by emotions. Often the decision to trust someone is based primarily on feelings, rather than on concrete behaviors. When trust is broken, it is hard to regain for emotional reasons.

Trust is based on social relationships (Uzzi, 1997; Levi, 2007). People make investments in developing and maintaining their relationships, and these ties among people encourage cooperation and trust. At the beginning of a social encounter, people take a chance on trusting the other person, while observing how the other responds. The experience of future trust is determined by what happens in the relationship. Trust is built over time through social interactions – through the sharing of feelings and thoughts.

Trust has a direct relationship to interpersonal communication, cooperation, and teamwork. However, it is also has a number of indirect relationships (Jones & George, 1998). When teams have a high levels of trust, several other favorable behaviors occur that support teamwork. People are more willing to help others in a variety of situations. The free exchange of information is encouraged, and there is an increased participation in the team's activities. People are more willing to commit to group goals (and to ignore personal goals) when trust is high. Finally, people are more willing to become involved in the team's activities when trust is high.

Building trust in a group requires performing two types of behaviors: being trusting and being trustworthy (Johnson & Johnson, 2006). Being trusting means being willing to be open with information and sharing with others by providing help and resources. Being trustworthy means accepting the contribution of other group members, supporting their actions, and cooperating in assisting them.

Trust is important in any type of team, but it is a critical enabling condition in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998; Adams & Galanes, 2009). Research has demonstrated that it can increase confidence and security relationships and promote open and influential information exchange (Earley, 1986), as well as reduce transaction costs, negotiation costs, and conflict (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998). Trust has also been related to the performance of inter-organizational collaborations in terms of goal fulfillment, quality, timeliness and flexibility (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998).

In virtual collaborations, trust is harder to identify and develop, yet may be even more critical, because the virtual context offer renders other forms of social control and psychological safety less effective or feasible. Furthermore, other factors known to contribute to social control and coordinate, such as geographical proximity, similarity in backgrounds, and experience, are often absent (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998). Because of the infrequency of face-to-face communication, direct observation and monitoring of team members is not possible. Furthermore, computer-based communication media is different from traditional face-to-face communication in that they eliminate cues about interpersonal affections such as warmth, attentiveness, and trust.

In fact, research has demonstrated that communicators use physical and linguistic co-presence (that is physical location) to make inferences about one another's knowledge (Hollingshead, 1998). This implies that lack of face-to-face contact in electronic communication may have a negative impact on message understanding. Indeed, electronically mediated groups have been found to have more difficulty establishing meaning of information and managing feedback discussion (DeSantics & Monge, 1999). Other studies show that individuals take longer to form impressions of one another when conversing electronically because it takes longer to decode social cues (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). Face-to-face help to build and repairing trust in traditional collaboration. Researchers have argued that this is also true in virtual collaborations (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999).

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) trust also takes more time to build because team members working together with team members from different cultures. Trust culture is a strong proponent for people to collaborate and share in Japanese organizations such as Matsushita, Mitsubishi, and Honda. Participants in the project should develop a sufficient level of trust among team members. Building trust requires the use of mutually understandable culture, including language and often prolonged socialization or two-way, face-to-face dialogue that

provides reassurance about points of doubt and leads to willingness to respect the other party's sincerity.

In this article, we present the issues of trust relationship in Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status companies. The study conducted identifies trust relationship among the team members who have been practicing virtual team work. Based on detail literature reviews and discussions, this paper focuses on the following two questions**:**

1) What are the issues that exist in a virtual team trust relationship?
2) How do workers describe the team relationship (in terms of team trust) with your team members?

QUALITATIVE METHOD

The Significance of a Qualitative Approach
The significance of using a qualitative approach lies in the advantages that it is exploratory and useful when researchers do not know the important variables to examine (Creswell, 1998, 2003). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), a qualitative approach is "concerned in capturing the individual's point of view" and in the need for "securing rich descriptions" (p. 10). In comparison, they argue that "quantitative researchers are deliberately unconcerned with rich descriptions because such details interrupt the process of developing generalization". Nevertheless, qualitative and quantitative approaches seek to achieve different emphases. In this context, Patton (2002) notes that:

"Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in-depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned" (p. 14).

The advantages of a qualitative as approach compared with a quantitative approach were highlighted as it is preferable with the aims of this research. Creswell (1998) noted that there are five philosophical assumptions that guide the design and are central to all good qualitative studies. These assumptions relate to the nature of reality (ontology issue), the relationship of the researcher to that being researched (epistemological issue), the role of values in a study (axiological issue), and the research process (methodological issue) (Figure 1). These philosophical perspectives provide guidance to the researcher to consider similar issues underpinning the whole process of the research as discussed in this paper.

In this study, we use the qualitative method approach using phenomenology. It aims at getting feedback and explaining the phenomenon. This approach also enables explanation, interpretation and a wide understanding about anything, including the introduction of themes and categories, and is able to provide detailed information about the case reviewed (Meriam, 1998). Thus, this study used focus group interviews to obtain information on informants' experiences that have worked in project management, teamwork and virtual team working.

Dimension	Biography	Phenomeno-logy	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Focus	Exploring life of an individual	Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a cultural and social group	Developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases
Discipline of Origin	Anthropology Literature History Psychology Sociology	Philosophy Sociology Psychology	Sociology	Cultural Anthropology Sociology	Political science, sociology evaluation, urban studies, other social sciences
Data collection	Primary interviews and collection	Long interviews with up to 10 respondents	Interview with 20-30 respondents 'to saturate' categories and detail a theory	Primary observations and interviews with additional artifacts during extended times in the field (e.g. 6 months to a year)	Multiple sources – documents, archival records, interviews, observations, physical artifacts
Data analysis	Stories Epiphanies Historical events	Statements Meanings Meaning themes General	Open coding Axial coding Selective	Description Analysis Interpretation	Descriptions Themes Assertions

Figure 1: Dimensions for Comparing Five Research Traditions in Qualitative Research

Source: Creswell, J.W. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* London: Sage Publications

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWING

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members (Bloor *et al.,* 2001). The focus group may be defined as an interview style designed for small groups. Using this approach, researchers strive to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and social cultural characteristics and processes among various groups (Lengua *et al.,* 1992). It is an attempt to learn about the biographies and life structures of group participants. To be more specific, focus group interviews are either guided or unguided discussions addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group and the researcher (Edmunds, 1999).

The focus group interview is a technique in which a researcher, referred as a moderator, conducts a one- to two-hour depth interview commonly with a group of 6-12 participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The moderator's job, like the standard interviewer's, is to draw out information from the participants regarding topics of importance to a given research investigation (Berg, 2007). The moderator also attempts to create highly synergistic environment in which participants openly share their perceptions (Clapper & Massey, 1996), build on each others', ideas, and jointly develop new insights. In this ways, the moderator attempts to develop a deeper understanding of the issue and to see it from the participants' perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Focus group interview are also informal group discussion and encourage informants to speak freely and completely about any related issues or topics research. Therefore, focus groups are an excellent means for collecting information from young children and adults, as well as from elderly adults (Berg, 2007). Focus group interviews also provide a means for collecting qualitative data in some settings and situations where a one-shot collection is necessary. Although one-shot data collections usually are associated with survey questionnaires, in some cases, focus group interviews may serve a similar purpose. The information gained is qualitative, and consists of experiences, opinions, ideas, and motivations for behavior, rather than 'figures and facts (Morgan, 1997).

Focus group interview method used in this study to obtain more in-depth information about the issues of trust relationship among team members. Based on the experience of team members who have worked for virtual team, this interview will give them space to talk and share information on trust relationship in virtual teamwork.

Sample and In-Depth Interviews
Focus group interviews were held with virtual team staff (two team leaders, and four team members: N=6) from consulting services organization (organization C). Organization C had received MSC status. Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is a Government designated zone, designed to leapfrog Malaysia into the information and knowledge age. MSC was conceptualized in 1996 with the full support of the Malaysian government. MSC has since grown into a thriving and dynamic global ICT hub.

MSC vision is to transform the nation into a knowledge based society driven by the new economy. With this commitment, MSC is determined to spearhead this transformation through ICT via industry and capacity building and socio economic development. One of MSC key efforts has been to provide the necessary facilities and technical skills for local and foreign businesses through its flagship applications and business services that it offers within MSC Malaysia's capability development. MSC also has helped revolutionize the ICT industry in Malaysia and helped contribute to the economical development of the country's economy. By doing so, MSC has helped bridge the digital gap between the nation and its capability to conduct e-commerce (Multimedia Corporation, 2008).

Meanwhile organization C has worldwide business activities in upstream, downstream, gas and liquefied natural gas, and project management for over 50 years. This work is a key component in development technology and responsible energy strategies. In addition, organization C leverages its leading-edge technical expertise for non-organizational clients worldwide. Organization C is not only a business network in Malaysia, but has a network of businesses in Europe, America, Asia Pacific and Middle East. Team members not only collaborate with colleagues in Malaysia but working together with team members in other countries. Team members also work beyond the boundaries of geography, time zone constraints and facing different cultures.

In terms of demographic informants, there are three Malaysians people (2 – Chinese, and 1 - Malay), and three citizens of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Meanwhile numbers of sex are four men, and two women. The informants age involved in this study were under 20 years (1 informant), and over 31 years (5 informants). In terms of marital status, three informants are married, three single, and one divorced. Informants have a master level education (3 informants), bachelor (two informants), and diplomas (1 informant). Informants

work as the section manager (3 informants), and senior manager (3 informants) within the organization. In terms of working experience in the organization, three informants have been working between 1 to 4 years, and three informants work more than 9 years.

Pilot interviews were conducted to test the instrument by interviewing groups or individuals experienced and knowledgeable on the phenomenon examined (Sim & Wright, 2000; Frey & Fontana, 1993). Pilot interviews were aimed at testing diverse question items, words, paragraph styles, understanding, and response from respondents. These pilot interviews served as a "dress rehearsal", in which the intended data collection plan was used as faithfully as possible as a final test run (Perry, 2001; Yin, 1994).

Before the interviews, the researcher conducted a short interview (through telephone and e-mail) to gather background information overall tasks work in virtual teams and ICT availability. In-depth focus group interviews (face-to-face interaction) focused in context of these teams (trust relationship). During in-depth focus group interviews informants were asked one question that is

1) How do you describe the team relationship (in terms of team trust) with your team members?

Location and Data Analysis

The selection of informants for focus group interviews was based on team members who have experience working in virtual teams, collaborate and interact using communication technologies with colleagues in other countries. Focus group interviews were conducted in Kuala Lumpur (Meeting Room, Organization C) on October 22, 2009. Interviews were conducted fully in English. Interviews times took one hour (11 – 12 pm). Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data was then analyzed using a thematic analysis method. In this study, the data was analyzed in English. The names of respondents and organization were changed for confidentiality purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings on the issue of virtual team trust relationship are discussed below

Trust Relationship

Results show that informants discussed on trust relationships element in virtual team work.

"Trust, we don't know the people in the team, then it's very difficult to form the relationship, it has a barrier. When barrier exists, it's very difficult for people to gain trust. When I look at you, I can see what you're doing, respond. I can engage from your body language, your eyes whether you are generally engaged. You don't bother me because you looking others people. You just listening others people view. This contributing the barrier in interpersonal relationship. So, you can be very easily to see somebody stand, somebody relax and not contributing. It may be generate people don't have anything to say because it is all the same. So, we cannot capture" (Stephen).

In virtual collaborations, trust is harder to identify and develop, yet may be even more critical, because the virtual context often renders other forms of social control and psychological safety less effective or feasible. Furthermore, other factors known to contribute to social control, interpersonal relationships, and coordination, such as geographical proximity, similarity in backgrounds, and experience, are often absent (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998). Because of the infrequency of face-to-face communication media differ from traditional face-to-face communication in that they eliminate cues about interpersonal affections such as warmth, attentiveness, and trust. It means that virtual team relationships are based on talk and behavior.

"In Northern, I can do things that make you feel comfortable without having these barriers. So, it's very difficult for people who have to meet like our team, and to have a project team with counterpart in USA. We should have one meeting to understand each other. But the management doesn't approve it because of cost concerns and sometimes people are prohibited to involve in the project" (Stephen).

Trust is important in any type of team, but it is a critical enabling condition in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998). Research has demonstrated that it can increase confidence and security in relationships and promote open and influential information exchange (Earley, 1986), as well as reduce transaction costs, negotiation costs, and conflict (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998). Trust has also related to the performance of inter-organizational collaborations in terms of goal fulfillment, quality, timeliness, and flexibility (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998).

"I think, the interesting part about working in virtual team is that especially when you are with people that you've never know, you just have to take for granted, that is already trust involved without asking for it and hopefully you'll find it but trust is not there as your don't progress along the project. In my point of view understanding is a main element in a team and the members need to take care very much on value aspect and   not questioning some other things that people normally do when building a relationship with colleagues. We don't have a kind or the opportunity to do that, so we just assume that trust is there" (Siew).

"In some ways, virtual team must be selective. We don't bring 15 people to the room; only 5 are participating in the room. So, in another hand, it's quite easy to handle. But it's very difficult to engage. How to participate together in 20 lines with different people? I think the point is about participating with focus line in virtual team. The key is to manage with a strong facilitator in the meeting even with people from outside. Make sure the people actually understand their works" (John).

Research has demonstrated that communicators use physical and linguistic co-presence (that is physical location) to make inferences about one another's knowledge (Hollingshead, 1998). This implies that lack of face-to-face contact in electronic communication may have a negative impact on message understanding. Indeed, electronic mediated groups have been found to have more difficulty establishing meaning of information and managing feedback in discussion (DeSantics & Monge, 1999). Other studies show that individuals take longer to form impressions of one another when conversing electronically because it takes longer to decode social cues (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). Face-to-face help to build and repairing trust in traditional collaboration. Recently, researchers have argued that this is also true in virtual collaborations (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). In a virtual environment, according to O'Hara-Deveraux and Johansen (1994, p. 243), 'Trust is the glue of the global workspace'.

Developing technologies and methods to facilitate trust and skills of virtual collaboration is probably one of the most important tasks facing managers (Duarte & Snydner, 2001; Khan, 2005). The increasing complexity of relationships at global and local levels requires deep, effective, and sustained collaboration built on a foundation of mutual trust.

"I just think the term "trust" is not applicable in virtual team relationship. I wouldn't say that just because somebody may be on the phone line and I wouldn't trust him or her particularly. But the things, if we are the leader or the facilitator, we have to be a lot more careful. It will be easier to understand and build up the relationship if you meet your group and everyone in the team, may be from certain region, certain religion and others. So, you probably have to get them, have to spend more time with them. Particularly, lack of trust is the problem for someone who is not comfortable in this environment. You may be communicating through the phone line in the room with different team members" (Tony).

"Sometimes virtual team may be having a small activity, to meet together for a cup of coffee or others activities. So, this is a way to develop the relationship and work with the team. I think you can do this right after having one frequent call if working in the project. Instead, you have big things to discuss, so it can still be done. But this activity you can do only face-to-face meeting and this is something everybody misses out" (Loh).

Trust is the foundation of effective relationships. People who are expected to work together successfully have to trust one another: that is they have to respect each other and confirm the other's worth and value as person. Most leaders, managers, supervisors, and employees strive to building trusting relationships. They recognize that trust is central to healthy work environments and performance, and the need that people have to be trusted and to trust others. In order to sustain trust, these core truths must be recognized: although trust may be held a value, it is actually built by behavior, and it will be both built and broken in all relationships. Both building trust and breaking trust are natural elements of relationships. Broken trust causes pain, doubt and confusion, but it may also be used to strengthen relationships and provide significant lesson when people recognize it and choose to work through it (Reina & Reina, 2006).

Individuals who trust one another are more inclined to collaborate freely, create, innovate, take risks, and openly communicate (Reina & Reina, 2006; Solomon & Flores, 2003). Strategic initiatives and change processes such as increased speed to market, decreased cycle time, research and development, and mergers and acquisitions all necessitate higher level of shared responsibility and accountability, which are fostered by high levels of trust.

"I think that is a challenge. Women start presenting in informal meeting to make sure the information is delivered successfully. Unfortunately, we cannot do that, we can only communicate, make plans and inform others via e-mail. It is different from having a meeting at the Coffee Bean, and also something we do not know about the culture aspect" (Stephen).

"I mean we can have optional time at the Coffee meet. Some conflict might be resolved there as well" (Siew).

"Informal meeting, we did have that big screen TV in one conference room, to discuss the project, to telecast with the Bangalore team or whatever. I don't know, that's a lot of picture in the room to my mind. I can recall looking at the thing without people in the room and its look like people are there but don't actually recall any interaction" (John).

"Something security, link to coffee length, and I don't want people complaint but I think the general people find a little bit unnerving or whatever. So, it means not the project delivery but it comes naturally even in the norms and environment" (John).

"For examples, coffee meet between KL and Bangalore peoples, where we gathered in an open area but interaction was limited because it was awkward although it was supposed to be a relaxed, get to know each other session" (John).

Trust influences communication, and communication influences trust. These two elements are closely related to each others. Sharing information, telling the truth, and speaking with good purpose are examples behaviors that create communication trust. In an environment with strong communication trust, people feel safe to ask questions, honestly speak their minds, challenge assumptions, raise issues, give and receive feedback, or acknowledge that they do not understand and ask for help (Reina & Reina, 2006). Communication trust helps establish norms of information flow and standards for how people talk with one another, share information, provide feedback, and work with mistakes that have been made.

In addition, communication processes are the key for mechanisms for establishing trust relationships. It involved the process of transferring information, meaning, and understanding from sender to receiver (Gibson, 1996). It is fundamental to any form in organizing and provides the basic blocks on which people collaborate, make decisions, and act to achieve organizational

objectives. Virtual team communication or collaboration are based on across distance, time, departments, organizations, and nations (O'Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994). Team members maybe collaborate with team members that different locations or countries, and differences work or organizational culture.

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) trust takes more time to build because team members working together with team members from different cultures. Trust culture strong proponent for people to collaborate and sharing in Japanese organizations such as Matsushita, Mitsubishi, and Honda. Participants in the project should develop a sufficient level of trust among team members. Building trust requires the use of mutually understandable culture, including language and often prolonged socialization or two-way, face-to-face dialogue that provides reassurance about points of doubt and leads to willingness to respect the other party's sincerity.

To conclude trust can be defined as a 'psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectation of the intention or behaviors or another person, group, or company (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998). A person trust a team when the person believes that team or the individuals in the team make a good-faith effort to act in accordance with commitments, when communication and negotiation are characterized by honesty, and when members do not take excessive advantage of one another (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996).

CONCLUSION

Trust plays an important role in working in virtual teams. The study proves that the dimensions of trust covering interpersonal communication, personality, size team members, face-to-face meeting needs, safety information when discussing face-to-face in public places, and difficulty to recall interaction via video conferencing with others team member.

There are several limitations of the study especially in terms of numbers and selection of samples. Due to difficulties in getting participants for the in-depth focus group interview as they were busy and often occupied with hectic working schedules, only six key informants were managed to be interviewed. Despite the small number of key informants of the study, the collected data was very rich, thorough and very informative.

To conclude, the present study provides interesting understanding on important key of trust relationship in virtual team. Virtual team is a phenomenon of today's working environment and will continue to expand and flourish in the future.

Appreciation

REFERENCES

Adams, K., & Galanes, G. J. 2000. *Communicating in groups: Applications and skills (*7th ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Badrinarayanan, V., & Arnett, D. B. 2008. Effective virtual new product development teams: An integrated framework. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, 23*, 242-248.

Berg, B. L. 2007. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M, & Robson, K. 2001. *Focus group in social research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Bowers, C., Smith, P. A., Bowers, J. A., & Nicholson, D. 2009. Using virtual worlds to assist distributed teams. In N. Kock (Ed.). *E-Collaboration: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications* (Vol. 1, pp. 505-521). Hershey, New York: Information Science Reference.

Clapper, D. L., & Massey, A. P. 1996. Electronic focus groups: A framework for exploration. *Information and Management, 30,* 43-50.

Cragan, J. F., Kasch, C. F., & Wright, D. W. 2009. *Communication in small groups: Theory, process and skills*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 2003. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cummings, J.L., & B.S. Teng. 2003. Transferring R&D knowledge: The key factors affecting knowledge transfer success. *Journal of Engineering Technology Management, 20,* 39-68.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. 2000. The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research (*2nd ed*.)* (pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

DeSanctis, G., & Monge, P. 1999. Communication processes for virtual organizations. *Organization Science, 10*(6), 693-703.

Duarte, D. L., & Snyder, N. T. 2001. *Mastering virtual teams: Strategies, tools, and techniques that succeed*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Earley, P. C. (1986). Trust, perceived importance of praise and criticism, and work performance: An examination of feedback in the United States and England. *Journal of Management, 12*, 457-473.

Edmunds, H. 1999. *The focus group research handbook*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Edwards, A. & Wilson, J. R. 2004. *Implementing virtual teams: A guide to organizational and human factors*. Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Limited.

Frey, J. H., & Fontana, A. 1993. The group interview social research. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.). *Successful focus group: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 20-34). London: Sage Publications.

Gibson, C. B. 1996. Do you hear what I hear? A framework for reconciling intercultural communication difficulties arising from cognitive styles and cultural values. In M. Erez and P. C. Earley (Ed.). *New Perspectives on International Industrial Organizational Psychology*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hollingshead, A. B. 1998. Distributed knowledge and transactive processes in groups. In M. A. Neale, E. A. Mannix & D. H. Gruenfeld (Eds.), *Research on managing groups and teams* (Vol. 1, pp. 557-573). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Ilgen, D. R., Hollenbeck, J. R., Johnson, M. D., & Jundt, D. K. 2005. Teams in organizations: From input-process-output models to IMOI models. *Annual Review of Psychology, 56,* 517–543.

Jarvenpaa, S. L., Knoll, K. & Leidner, D. E. 1998. Is anybody out there? Antecedents of trust in global virtual teams. *Journal of Management Information Systems, 14*(4), 29-64.

Jarvenpaa, S. L., & Leidner, D. E. 1999. Communication and trust in global virtual teams. *Organization Science*, *10*(6), 791–815.

Johnson, D. W. & Johnson F. P. 2006. *Joining together: Group theory and group skills* (9ᵗʰ ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Jones, G., & George, J. 1998. The experience and evolution of trust: Implications for cooperation and teamwork, *Academy of Management Review, 23*, 531-546.

Khan, B. 2005. *Managing E-learning strategies: Designs, delivery, implementation, and evaluation*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.

Krueger, R. A, & Cassey, M. A. 2000. *Focus groups*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Lengua, L. J., Roosa, M. W., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Michaeles, M. L., Berg, C. N., & Weschler, L. F. (1992). Using focus groups to guide the development of a parenting program for difficult-to-research, high-risk families. *Family Relations, 41*, 163-168.

McGrath, J., & Hollingshead, A. (1994). *Groups interacting with technology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Morgan, D. L. 1997. *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Multimedia Corporation. (2008). About MSC Malaysia. Retrieved April 16, 2011, from http://www.mscmalaysia.my/topic/12071141958827.

Nonaka, I., & Hirotaka, T. 1995. *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

O'Hara-Devereaux, M., & Johansen, R. 1994. *Global work: Bridging distance, culture and time*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (*3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Prasad, K., & Akhilesh, K. B. (2002). Global virtual teams: What impacts their design and performance? *Team Performance Management*, *8,* 102 - 112.

Perry, C. 2001. Case research in marketing. *The Marketing Review, 1*, 303 – 323.

Reina, D., & Reina, M. 2006. *Trust and betrayal in the workplace: Building effective relationships in your organization*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. 1998. Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review, 23*(3), 393-404.

Sim, J., & Wright, C. 2000. *Research in healthcare: Concepts, designs and methods*: f Gloucestershire, UK: Nelson Thornes.

Solomon, R. C., & Flores, F. (2003). *Building trust in business, politics, relationships, and life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sproull, L. & Kiesler, M. 1991. *Connections: New ways of working in the networked organization*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Thompson, L. L. 2007. Making the team: A guide for managers (3ʳᵈ ed). Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Uzzi, **B**. **1997**. Social structure and competition: The paradox of embeddedness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 35-67.

Yin, R.K. 1994. *Case study research: Design and methods*. California: Sage Publications.

Zaheer, A., McEvily, B., & Perrone, V. 1998. Does trust matter? Exploring the Efefects of interorganizational and interpersonal trust on performance. *Organization Science*, *9*(2), 141-159.