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Faculty of Business Economics

Master of Management

Master's thesis

Network Relationships and the Internationalization Process of Born Globals: the Case of Turkish Manufacturing Companies

Gurel Akar

Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management, specialization
International Marketing Strategy

SUPERVISOR :

Prof. dr. Pieter PAUWELS



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Preface

I wrote the thesis with great eagerness and excitement during the academic year and presented it to crown my Master's degree. I believe that this thesis has deepened my knowledge of international marketing strategies, allowed me to improve myself and prepared me for my future career path. I also want to express my pride in what I have done during my Master's degree. I am grateful to complete my successful journey in my Master's degree with this thesis.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the ones who have stood by me throughout the year while I was writing my thesis.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to my highly esteemed supervisor, Prof. Dr. Pieter Pauwels, for his precious support, feedback and guidance. I feel that having a supervisor like him made me privileged. Also, I am grateful to have had an opportunity to learn and benefit from his expertise.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my family, who have always believed in me, supported me and provided me with all the necessary resources. I also want to thank them for ensuring me to study at Hasselt University as a Master's student.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends who have always been standing behind me, keeping me motivated and believing in me during the whole Master's programme.

It is my desire that this thesis will provide valuable understanding to the researchers and managers and contribute to the existing literature while being a baseline for future research.

Gürel Akar

21/07/2024

Summary

The initial motivation of the thesis was understanding the impacts of network relationships and the internationalization processes of born globals operating in the manufacturing industry in Turkey, as an emerging economy, on each other. Born globals are confronted by many obstacles, especially resource constraints, during their internationalization processes. In order to avoid these obstacles, born globals rely on their network relationships (Freeman et al., 2006). Hence, the ways that born globals use their network relationships to make their internationalization process easier becomes a matter of curiosity.

Since the born globals mainly operate in the service industry, as Singh (2017) suggested in his article, the thesis focuses on the manufacturing industry to understand how the situations work for the born globals, especially in the manufacturing industry.

Additionally, since the changes in the dynamics of the network relationships are not explicitly mentioned, the study aims to reveal the effects of the internationalization process of manufacturing born globals on the dynamics of their network relationships.

Hence, the thesis answers the following research questions:

- How do network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect their internationalization activities?
- To what extent do pre-internationalization network relationships affect the internationalization process of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?
- To what extent does internationalization affect the dynamics of the network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?
- To what extent do network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect their success in internationalization?

Methodology

Semi-structured online interviews are conducted for the qualitative study of the thesis to obtain the data from the participants' experiences. Participants are chosen selectively by adopting the purposeful sampling method. Depending on the born global criteria identified by Cavusgil and Knight (1996), the founders or senior managers of the Turkish manufacturing born globals are reached through e-mail.

Findings

The study demonstrated that the Turkish manufacturing born globals are building their network relationships mainly through crowded events such as trade fairs and congresses, depending on their sector. In addition to these, in order to build relationships, Turkish manufacturing born globals visit

potential network partners by travelling to the targeted market. Also, the network partners are finding the Turkish manufacturing born globals to be in a network relationship with them. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals are contacting some agencies that help them to build network relationships in the markets where it is difficult to reach. Ultimately, the study showed that the Turkish manufacturing born globals attract new network partners with their cheap but also high-quality products through face-to-face interactions. Turkish manufacturing born globals build these network relationships to obtain the necessary intangible resources, such as knowledge and reputation, from them to facilitate their internationalization processes. Knowledge is their most vital asset. They learn about the dynamics of foreign markets and their competitors. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals can learn about opportunities abroad through their network relationships and, therefore, follow the right strategy for their internationalization processes. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals increase their recognition and brand awareness in the international arena through the good reputation of their network relationships. Turkish manufacturing born globals are also benefiting from their pre-internationalization network relationships. However, these relationships are only beneficial if the founders have a significant background in the sector in which their firms are already operating. Otherwise, these pre-internationalization network relationships can even be harmful to the internationalization processes. Furthermore, network relationships are the key resources for Turkish manufacturing born globals in their way to achieving success in their internationalization processes. Turkish manufacturing born globals mainly rely on sustainable relationships to have a successful internationalization process rather than any monetary indicators. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals could reach end customers and build new beneficial network relationships in foreign markets through their network relationships. Also, in order to achieve success, network relationships provide crucial feedback to allow Turkish manufacturing born globals to make changes to the product and take action quickly in the dynamic structure of the foreign markets. Furthermore, network relationships allow Turkish manufacturing born globals to strengthen their brand names in foreign markets and, therefore, have a successful internationalization process. Hence, it is obvious that Turkish manufacturing born globals actively use their network relationships to achieve success in their internationalization process.

The study demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals depend on some characteristics in their network relationships to maximize the benefits they gain during the internationalization process. First of all, Turkish manufacturing born globals mostly build social relationships with individuals instead of businesses. They believe that commercial trade can be efficiently carried out between individuals. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals tend to be in a network relationship with their nonclose circle to make each process documented. Furthermore, it is revealed that the most valuable network relationships for Turkish manufacturing born globals are emotionally close network relationships. They facilitate the resource exchange and create a comfortable zone for themselves with those relationships. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals cannot benefit from the network relationship if it is not trustworthy. Therefore, they seek to ensure trust within the relationships. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals adjust their network density in foreign markets depending on the existence of loyal relationships. If they have loyal relationships in the targeted market, they rely on high levels of network density. Furthermore, Turkish

manufacturing born globals build as many network relationships as possible to be able to obtain more knowledge. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals tend to have high network centrality to gain strategic advantages, facilitate knowledge transfer and attract new relationships during their internationalization process. Finally, they tend to have strong network relationships by ensuring trust among the network actors, having a reciprocal relationship and being emotionally close with the network actors. These preferred characteristics allow Turkish manufacturing born globals to maximize the effectiveness of the network relationships during the internationalization process.

Moreover, the study demonstrated that the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals affect the dynamics of their network relationships as much as their network relationships affect their internationalization process. International expansion increases the possibility of being affected by external events worldwide. The dynamics of the network relationships can be changed by these external events. Also, internationalization processes force Turkish manufacturing born globals to increase their network size to be able to manage the developed internationalization. Additionally, the internationalization processes force Turkish manufacturing born globals to be in a network relationship with actors that have different needs and resources but also complement the Turkish manufacturing born globals' businesses. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals tend to be close to their network relationships to facilitate their international operations as internationalization expands. Furthermore, internationalization processes improve the emotional state between network actors. However, this situation makes it difficult to manage the relationships. Turkish manufacturing born globals must prioritize the most beneficial relationships for their international expansion when they have numerous emotionally close relationships. In addition, internationalization processes force Turkish manufacturing born globals to change their firm structure. Finally, Turkish manufacturing born globals change their decision-makers as internationalization grows. Hence, it is revealed that the internationalization processes improve Turkish manufacturing born globals and change some dynamics within their network relationships.

Implications

The study provided significant theoretical and practical insights into the contributions of network relationships to the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals and the influence of their internationalization process on the dynamics of network relationships. The thesis added a new understanding to the literature. The effects of the network relationships and the internationalization processes on each other can be understood for the Turkish manufacturing born globals and the manufacturing born globals in the developing economies through the conducted study. Additionally, the management team of the manufacturing born globals in emerging economies can optimize their internationalization processes and network relationships by adjusting their strategies according to the findings of the study.

Future Research

Future research can be conducted by taking this thesis as a starting point. Future research should be developed by considering the limitations of the thesis. Firstly, Turkish manufacturing born globals have different needs in their internationalization process in each era of the Turkish economy. Hence, future research should focus on the manufacturing born globals established in a specific era of the Turkish economy. Additionally, it is obvious that Turkish manufacturing born globals use their network relationships differently in each sector. Therefore, a sectoral focus is needed for future research. Finally, a deeper understanding can be achieved by conducting a more detailed study by adjusting and increasing the sample size and adding new network characteristics.

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1. Abstract

The study explores the effects of network relationships and the internationalization process of born globals on each other in the Turkish manufacturing industry. It is evident that the firms that adopted the born global model of internationalization suffer from the scarcity of tangible and intangible resources during their internationalization processes. Born globals in emerging economies face these scarce resources and further challenges more than the born globals in developed economies. Therefore, born globals in emerging economies require some drivers for their internationalization processes. The study focuses on network relationships as a critical driver for the internationalization process of born globals. Additionally, since the born globals mainly operates in the service industry, the study focuses on clarifying the internationalization processes of born globals operating in the manufacturing industry. Moreover, since it is challenging to keep the same network relationship dynamics as internationalization expands, the study also aims to reveal the effects of the internationalization process of manufacturing born globals on the dynamics of their network relationships. Ultimately, the study focuses on the manufacturing born globals in Turkey as an emerging economy and aims to explore the contributions of the network relationships to the internationalization process of the Turkish manufacturing born globals and the effect of their internationalization process on the dynamics of the network relationships. In order to gather the data, semi-structured interviews are conducted with the founders or senior managers of the Turkish manufacturing born globals. Eight born global firms that operate in the Turkish manufacturing industry are selected based on the born global criteria defined by Knight and Cavusgil (1996). Once all the data is gathered, a coding tree is created to clarify the data and see the common themes discussed in the interviews to analyze the data effectively. The study's findings show that the Turkish manufacturing born globals use their network relationships to obtain the intangible resources needed for their internationalization processes, such as knowledge and reputation. Additionally, it is revealed that Turkish manufacturing born globals rely on specific characteristics in their network relationships to maximize the benefits gained from network relationships for foreign expansion. Turkish manufacturing born globals mainly depend on trustable and emotionally close relationships to facilitate their internationalization processes. Also, when the benefits of pre-internationalization network relationships to the internationalization processes of Turkish born globals are investigated, it is concluded that they are only beneficial if the founders of the Turkish manufacturing born globals have a strong background in the related sector. Network relationships also contribute to the success of the internationalization processes. Turkish manufacturing born globals reach the necessary stakeholders, obtain feedback and brand their products through their network relationships to achieve success in their internationalization processes. Furthermore, the study reveals that the internationalization forces Turkish manufacturing born globals to change their network relationship dynamics purposely to keep their network relationships effective or mandatorily in case of an external event. The thesis provided an understanding of the effects of the network relationships and the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals on each other, implications for the manufacturing born globals in emerging economies, and suggestions for future research.

2. Introduction

Establishing a presence in foreign markets has become a necessity for companies that want to continuously expand their business. There have always been some better opportunities that existed somewhere out of the home market. However, these opportunities have had to be found by the firms in order to transform these opportunities into real value. Therefore, only the ones who have a great vision of being international have been able to recognize the opportunities and expand their business.

Each firm decides on different strategies in its path to becoming an international company. While some of them adopt a slow process, others could seek a fast way to internationalize. The process of generating a considerable part of the revenues by having a presence in the foreign markets shortly after the foundation is called the 'born global' internationalization process, and the ones who adopt this type of internationalization process are called 'born globals' (Knight & Cavusgil, 2005). Born globals have embraced the vision of internationalizing as fast as they can. However, that aim has also brought some challenges. They have faced a scarcity of resources and a lack of experiential knowledge more than firms which adopt a slow-paced and gradual internationalization process. So, the born globals' internationalization process became remarkable when they overcame the barriers against their internationalization (McCormick & Somaya, 2020). Moreover, it can be said that born globals in emerging economies have had more challenges than born globals in developed economies (McCormick & Somaya, 2020). Although the challenges exist for born globals, there are some ways for born globals to overcome these challenges. Building network relationships and using these networks during the internationalization process have been considered as one of the best ways to overcome the barriers of internationalization (Freeman et al., 2006). Researchers have tried to explain the role of network relationships in the internationalization process of born globals. However, only a few of them have addressed born globals from emerging economies. Additionally, since born globals are required to internationalize within three years after their establishment, they might have built some network relationships before their first international activity. It was suggested that a firm's pre-existing networks, which are the networks that firms already have before their first international operation, could explain the firms' fast internationalization processes (Zucchella et al., 2007). Therefore, the influence of firms' pre-existing networks is also worth considering.

Moreover, the firms' internationalization processes have also affected the firm's networks as much as the firms' networks affect their internationalization processes. Hence, there will be inescapably some changes happening in the dynamics of firms' network relationships during their internationalization process. Therefore, it is believed that these changes in the network dynamics should be taken into consideration.

It has been shown that the internationalization processes for both service firms and manufacturing firms are evolving in different ways (Prashantham & Young, 2011). They might have different needs and strategies in their way of internationalizing. Also, born globals have existed more in the service industry than in the manufacturing industry (Singh, 2017). Hence, the research that was conducted

on born globals in the manufacturing industry has been limited. Therefore, it is believed that the manufacturing industry is the area that requires more research in order to understand the behaviour of born globals in the manufacturing industry since they are in the minority who adopt the born global model of internationalization.

Due to the abovementioned reasons, the thesis will be targeted to answer the questions about the contributions of the network relationships and pre-internationalization network relationships to the internationalization processes of the manufacturing born globals in the emerging economies; contributions of the network relationships to the success of the internationalization processes of the manufacturing born globals in the emerging economies; and effects of the internationalization process of manufacturing born globals operating in the emerging economies to the dynamics of their network relationships.

Turkish companies have been willing to expand their businesses and strive for continuous expansion. Hence, Turkish companies have been open to exporting their own goods and services. However, they first tend to expand their business within their own country in order to gain experience, knowledge and some other resources. Therefore, most Turkish firms tend to adopt a slow and gradual internationalization process instead of being born global (Karabulut, 2013). Also, the firms operating in the service industry have mainly constituted the economic growth in Turkey and, therefore, primarily existed in the foreign markets as key actors in exporting (Haven & Van Der Marel, 2018). Hence, it is worth understanding the actions of born globals, especially in the Turkish manufacturing industry. For this thesis, it has been decided that Turkey is one of the best research areas as an emerging market and worth considering. Additionally, network relationships have provided vital resources to the born globals in their internationalization path and allowed them to overcome the constraints against their internationalization processes (Yener et al., 2014). Born globals have required both social and business network relationships to be able to keep informed about opportunities abroad (Batas & Liu, 2013). Therefore, network relationships have been vital for the born globals' internationalization. Since the network relationships have been one of the best factors that explain the born globals' internationalization process, the impact of network relationships on the internationalization process of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry and also the impact of their internationalization process on their network dynamics have been the matter of curiosity. Therefore, the objective of this research is to investigate the impact of network relationships and the internationalization process of born globals on each other in the Turkish manufacturing industry. According to the mentioned information, the purpose of this thesis will be to find answers to the following research questions:

- How do network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect their internationalization activities?
- To what extent do pre-internationalization network relationships affect the internationalization process of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?
- To what extent does internationalization affect the dynamics of the network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?

- To what extent do network relationships of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect their success in internationalization?

3. Literature Review

Internationalization has been researched for a long period. It is basically known as the process of crossing the home country's borders. It is the firm's strategic decision to expand its activities worldwide, and these internationalization activities directly contribute to the firm's overall performance (Hilmerston, 2013). Literature shows that there are three key components of internationalization, which identify the firm's strategic decisions about internationalization (Hilmerston, 2013). The first one is the scale of internationalization. The scale of internationalization refers to the level of reliance on the host market. That component has an effect on the management team's decisions. For instance, firms could develop their perspective and focus more on international operations when they increase their reliance on the process of internationalization (Hilmerston, 2013). The second one is related to the scope of internationalization. The scope of internationalization refers to the firm's dispersion to different locations (Lu & Beamish, 2004). That dispersion would enable the firm's ability to access and gain knowledge. The final component is about the degree of the pace of internationalization. The pace of internationalization identifies the time of the firm's first internationalization activity after its foundation (Casillas & Acedo, 2012).

There have been many studies on the firms' internationalization processes since the rise of the first definition of internationalization. Researchers have identified some internationalization models towards the aim of understanding and explaining the firm's internationalization activities. There are two main models of internationalization. One of them is the gradual internationalization process, the Uppsala Model, which includes sequential stages for internationalization. The other one is the Born Global Model of internationalization, which seeks the fastest way to establish a presence in foreign markets.

3.1. Uppsala Model of Internationalization

The Uppsala Model was developed by Johanson and Vahlne (1977) as a model that explains the firm's internationalization process. The model expresses the internationalization process as a slow and time-consuming process that requires incremental and sequential steps to internationalize. According to the Uppsala Model, international commitment could be enhanced by gaining experience and knowledge through that slow, steady and iterative process. Also, the model suggests that expansion in the home market is required in order to begin internationalization (Oliveira et al., 2018).

In order to internationalize, gradual internationalization steps are taken according to the establishment chain, which was identified by Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975). The establishment chain consists of four stages. The firm does not have any regular export operations at first. Afterwards, exports are done through the agencies. Then, the international operations start

to be managed by subsidiaries in foreign markets. In the final step, manufacturing facilities are established to finalize the internationalization process. Hence, the establishment chain stages demonstrate the growing allocation of resources to foreign markets for international operations. Also, the establishment chain stages result in gaining experience, which reduces the uncertainty of internationalization (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975). In the first stage of the establishment chain, there is no opportunity to gain knowledge and experience since the firm does not devote resources to foreign markets. However, the firm has an opportunity to acquire information about host markets through agencies. The next stage is about gaining experience directly with the subsidiaries. This experience and the information gathered through market involvement allow the firm to decide on its future strategies for the internationalization process. The final stage demonstrates the maximization of resource utilization (Wach, 2021). However, Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) identified exceptional situations for the establishment chain. According to Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975), some of the stages can be done faster or even skipped due to the degree of the former experience of the firm, and also, it can be unnecessary to commit resources to some particular markets because of the size of these particular markets.

Moreover, at the beginning of internationalization, firms tended to enter foreign markets that had low levels of psychic distance. In other words, firms seek similarities in some elements, such as linguistic, cultural, and political, when deciding to enter a new market (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990). Understanding foreign markets becomes tough when the psychic distance increases (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Hence, firms choose the easiest way to understand the host market by seeking markets with a low psychic distance (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990).

The Uppsala model was developed based on the establishment chain. The model consists of state and change aspects. There is a relationship between those two aspects. Both aspects affect each other. As can be seen in Figure 1, while market commitment and market knowledge have an impact on the decisions about resource commitments to foreign markets and current activities, commitment decisions and current activities have an effect on market commitment and market knowledge (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990).

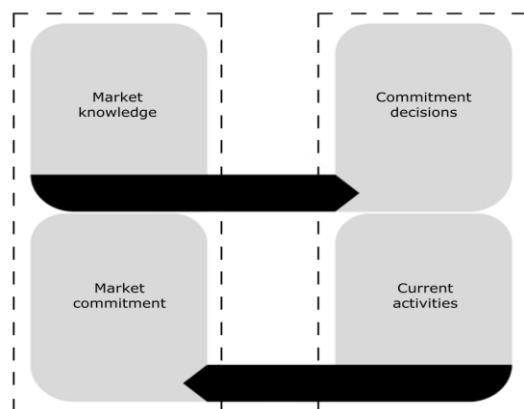


Figure 1: Uppsala model of internationalization (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977)

The model emphasizes the necessity of experiential market knowledge, which is required to increase commitments (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Knowledge is a vital component of the model since commitment decisions are influenced by market knowledge (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). There are several ways to gather knowledge about a particular market. However, the Uppsala model is based on experiential knowledge because of its unique nature. Experiential knowledge is gained harder than other ways to gain knowledge, but it is strategically logical because it is difficult to imitate (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). The more knowledge obtained from the experiences would definitely reduce the uncertainty and also help to recognize market opportunities (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990). Also, market commitment and knowledge are strongly related to one another. Therefore, the market commitment has been influenced by the amount of knowledge that the firm obtained through its experiences (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). In this scenario, knowledge can obviously be seen as a resource, and in general, the value and the total quantity of resources that have been devoted to a certain market have an impact on the degree of market commitment. According to the model, the firm needs to perform its current activities well in order to enable its learning ability (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Thus, one of the best ways to acquire market knowledge is through current activities (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Hence, it appears that the variable of the current activities has an important role in the Uppsala model. Additionally, the commitment decisions have been carried out by the firm according to the identified opportunities and risks in the target markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

Since the impact of the network on the internationalization process was understood by several researchers, in 2009, the Uppsala Model was revisited by Johanson and Vahlne (2009). This updated model of the internationalization process relies on the effect of network relationships. Building strong relationships with the actors in the foreign market would make the internationalization process easier. According to Johanson and Vahlne (2009), relations, based on the mutually beneficial way, between the firm and its partners bring success in the internationalization process. Therefore, building relationships is crucial for internationalization. However, it requires an investment of time, effort and resources (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Also, the ease of building relationships is influenced by psychic distance (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). As mentioned in the original model, knowledge is the essence of the Uppsala Model and is gained through the firms' current activities. However, the updated Uppsala Model states that knowledge can also be acquired through network relationships. Hence, firms and actors in foreign markets can contribute to knowledge development with their own activities (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

3.2. Born Global Model of Internationalization

Born Global is an internationalization process that demonstrates early and rapid internationalization in contrast to the gradual internationalization process. Also, the firms which adopt the born global internationalization process are called born globals. According to the Born Global model of the internationalization process, all firms can be internationalized regardless of their resources, experience-based knowledge and size (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). The term "Born Global" was identified in literature in the late 20th century. The term "Born Global" has been used by researchers

while examining the rapid internationalization in the majority of the literature. However, there are some other terms - such as international new ventures, global start-ups, and early internationalizing firms - that are also used by researchers to demonstrate the firms that adopt the rapid internationalization strategy.

The term "Born Global" was added to the literature by Rennie (1993). In the first definition of the term "Born Global", which is identified by Rennie (1993), firms can be called born globals when they start their international activities within or right after two years after their establishment and gain at least seventy-six per cent of their revenue from their international sales. Therefore, there have been several studies conducted about born globals, and several definitions have been made for the term "Born Globals" after the contribution of an article written by Rennie (1993) to the literature. Those definitions mostly differed in the years needed for internationalization after the foundation of the firm and the revenue gained through international activities. This thesis will focus on the definition which was made by Knight and Cavusgil (1996). According to this definition of born globals, firms that start doing their international activities in maximum of three years after their establishment and also gain at least a quarter of their revenues through their international sales can be named born globals (Knight & Cavuşgil, 2005).

As mentioned above, there are several definitions of born globals in the literature in terms of some conditions. However, these definitions were all agreed on the vision of the born globals. Born globals set their visions and all of their goals in order to internationalize rapidly. The market is the whole world for Born Globals, so they do not try to establish a domestic presence (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2004). In other words, Born Globals believe that improving in the home market is not necessary to gain knowledge (Moen & Servais, 2002). Spreading in different geographies, finding the most appropriate markets, seeking potential opportunities to grow, and reaching a broader customer base are more crucial than operating in domestic markets for a while. In most cases, the Born Globals consist of small and medium enterprises that operate with cutting-edge technologies to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors in the markets (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2004). This technology-based structure allows born globals to take advantage in the niche markets. In most scenarios, niche markets are targeted by born globals to sustain their competitiveness (Taylor & Jack, 2012). Additionally, born globals were seen as entrepreneurial firms that seek and find opportunities in foreign markets (Cavuşgil & Knight, 2015). Born globals overcome the constraint of the scarcity of resources with their entrepreneurial spirit. Also, their innovative, entrepreneurial and perseverant characteristics contribute to overcoming the barriers against their internationalization process (Cavuşgil & Knight, 2015).

Moreover, as mentioned in the definition of internationalization, three dimensions - the pace of internationalization, the scope of internationalization and the scale of internationalization - were identified as the determinants of the born globals (Øyna & Alon, 2018). The speed of internationalization is expected to be less than three years. Born globals are known as firms that spread their operations into several foreign markets. Therefore, a high degree of internationalization scope would be expected. Finally, the scale of internationalization is also expected to be high. The

contribution of international sales to the firms' revenue stream determines the degree of the internationalization scale (Øyna & Alon, 2018).

There are some factors that contribute to the born globals' existence. These factors are related to the constantly changing situations in the targeted market, advancements in the technological infrastructure and individuals' abilities (Madsen & Servais, 2017). The international markets have been dynamic and always changing. Due to these changes, the opportunities to enter niche markets could be easily recognized by born globals because of the increasing number of niche markets. Also, customer preferences and needs have been converging. Thus, these converged preferences allow born globals to exploit their creative and innovative businesses worldwide (Madsen & Servais, 2017). Those mentioned changes in the international markets have mostly been triggered by advancements in technology. Technology has been improved in various fields. For instance, the improvements in manufacturing have allowed companies to optimize their processes and minimize costs, so manufacturing products for niche markets has become a logical option (Madsen & Servais, 2017). Since the born globals have been using cutting-edge technologies, those advancements in technology could be seen as an advantage by the firms and also an opportunity to increase international activities. Also, individuals' abilities have been enhanced via those technological advancements. People have learned how to take advantage of technology through their experiences. These people could be seen as a resource for born globals and contribute to the growth of the born globals (Madsen & Servais, 2017). Furthermore, entrepreneurs in these born globals could be counted as another factor that contributes to the born globals' existence. Entrepreneurs' characteristics - such as risk-taking, prior international experience, visionary thinking, seizing opportunities and networking abilities - have been a crucial factor that forces born globals to internationalize (Pawęta, 2013).

3.3. Born Globals in the Manufacturing Industry

Indeed, born globals have differed between the service and manufacturing industries. Hence, different actions and behaviors could be expected from born globals depending on the industry in which they are operating. Born globals that are operating in the service industry have been internationalized faster than the ones in the manufacturing industry (Singh, 2017). Also, most of the born globals are operating in the service industry (Singh, 2017). Therefore, it can be claimed that most manufacturing firms do not tend to adopt the born global model of internationalization (Singh, 2017).

Born globals that are manufacturing goods have mostly existed as small firms and are characterized by their advanced technology (Andersson, 2004; Braunerhjelm & Halldin, 2019). They have been benefiting from their advanced technology when they set a new goal or new strategy in their way to internationalize and also come up with new products (Andersson, 2004).

3.4. The Success Factors of Internationalization

Indeed, the outcome of the internationalization process must be satisfactory. In other words, success is essential for firms in their internationalization activities. Therefore, the success of internationalization needed to be measured and then assessed by firms. The degree of internationalization, the financial performance of internationalization, goal accomplishments and satisfaction levels are considered in order to evaluate the success (Kubíčková & Lenka, 2012).

The success determinants of internationalization have been discussed in the literature by the researchers. Therefore, various kinds of determinants have been identified. One of these factors is the commitment. It is vital for firms to show their commitment to the internationalization processes in order to achieve success (Bianchi et al., 2018). Especially, this international commitment is created by top managers and entrepreneurs within the firm. Entrepreneurs of the firms have been one of the essential determinants of internationalization success, as they have been essential in every part of the internationalization process. Hence, entrepreneurs' specific characteristics, such as their attitude towards internationalization and state of mind, have enabled them to achieve the success of internationalization (Idris & Saad, 2019). Also, the higher knowledge that firms have obtained from their prior experiences or during the internationalization processes would allow them to achieve greater success in their internationalization processes. This knowledge consists of the knowledge about the foreign markets and IT knowledge of the firm (Handoyo et al., 2021). In most cases, knowledge about the foreign markets, which are targeted by the firms, is required in order to be successful in the internationalization process. Furthermore, the networks of the firms have been vital for their international activities. Hence, the success of internationalization could also be understood by the evaluation of the firms' prior and appropriate network relationships (Thornton et al., 2019). Networks of the firms make the internationalization process easier for the firms and engage in the internationalization process as a crucial component. Therefore, those built network relationships bring success (Yoon et al., 2018).

There have been some requirements that need to be completed by the firms in order to achieve success in their internationalization processes. First of all, the international commitment must have been adopted by the whole organization, and the goals and the vision of the firm need to be set in line with the international commitment. Also, the capability of taking action against the dynamic structure of internationalization, such as changing demands and emerging opportunities, has been essential. In order to take this mentioned action, firms must have been capable of seizing the market changes. Firms also have to be able to analyze cultural differences and adjust their strategies according to these differences. Additionally, enhanced quality and innovation have been taken into account by the firms in order to achieve success. Finally, research in the target market has been beneficial for reaching the desirable satisfaction levels in terms of success. This market research must be conducted by the firms before entering the market (Kubíčková & Lenka, 2012).

3.5. Network Relationships

Networks are the entire collection of connections that exist between an actor and its counterparts in the network relationship. These counterparts can be anyone or any institution as long as there is a resource exchange between the two parties (Sepulveda & Gabrielsson, 2013). For companies, building networks has numerous advantages, and each of them is significant for expanding their operations. For instance, networks allow companies to reach and utilize resources that are valuable to international business (Hånell et al., 2018). Companies can also gain knowledge through their networks and learn from their partners' experiences. This shared knowledge facilitates companies' value creation process. Additionally, networks can help companies to deal with uncertainties and market entry decisions. Also, some particular networks offer better reputations. Furthermore, companies might lower their costs, especially their transaction costs, through their network relationships (Lin & Lin, 2016). Similar desires among companies motivate them to build network relationships in order to take advantage of networking's reciprocal gains (Ahmadian & Abdolmaleki, 2018). Building these networks with other actors takes effort and time (Johanson & Mattsson, 2015). Networks consist of two types, which are business networks and social networks.

The business network is stated as the association between one company and the other companies (Ellis, 2010). Companies can access opportunities, resources, and knowledge through business networks in order to accomplish their goals (Ahmadian & Abdolmaleki, 2018). Therefore, business networks offer benefits, including trustability, usefulness, and access to the most recent knowledge. They also offer an environment to build relationships (Abbas et al., 2019). Business networks are vital for companies' growth and survival (Abbas et al., 2019).

Social networks are based on interactions between individuals, especially social exchanges, while information and business exchanges are possible as well (Björkman & Kock, 1995). These social networks consist of individuals' existing relations (Morkertaite & Sekliuckiene, 2015). Through these existing relations, individuals can reach the opportunities, and resources and also utilize their resources (BarNir & Smith, 2002).

Network relationships also differ between cultures. Hence, there are different expectations from network relationships in different locations. There are three factors that need to be considered when establishing network relationships with other actors in different regions. Firstly, the networking partner's patience needs to be examined. Patience was defined as the willingness to stand by for a profitable outcome. Patience is perceived differently in each culture, and building trust in network relationships can be difficult when the level of patience is low (Jansson et al., 2007). The second factor is suspicion. The suspicion is the extent of whether the network relationship will be seen negatively in the future. However, it is possible to avoid these suspicious perceptions through the existing social networks (Shirokova & McDougall-Covin, 2012). The last factor is about performance. It is obvious that the performance of the actors in specific operations should be high. It determines the perception of the relationship between actors in networks. In some cases, this performance

factor can be ignored when the network is established as a social network. However, the performance of the counterparts would still be important in the long run (Jansson et al., 2007).

3.6. Characteristics of Network Relationships

The structure of the firms' network relationships has been investigated in the literature, and the components of the network structure have been identified. These network structure components consist of the tie strength, network size, network centrality, network density and network heterogeneity.

Analyzing the strength of ties has been crucial in order to understand whether firms have a better network. The definition of tie strength was first identified by Granovetter (1973). According to Granovetter (1973), the reciprocity, trustability of the network, deep emotions between the actors and the time spent in the network relationship have constituted the tie strength. The degree of the tie strength has been determined by the existence of these factors. Reciprocity refers to the existence of beneficial outcomes in the network relationship for both parties. In a reciprocal relationship, it is expected to invest the same amount of effort by the actors. Therefore, firms have been anticipated to focus on creating mutual values instead of personal benefits (Liu et al., 2018). Reciprocity is strongly related to trust, which is another determinant of the tie strength, in the network relationships. The trustability of the network relationship will be increased if the reciprocal attitudes between the parties have been ensured, and the combination of both trust and reciprocity has an influence on the quality of the network ties (Liu et al., 2018; Li et al., 2012). The trustability of the network relationship has been dependent on the notion that one's contribution to the network relationship will benefit the other actor's business (Blois, 1999). Building trust has been possible in a situation where the actors can easily rely on each other's actions in the network (Blois, 1999). Also, gathering knowledge and reaching the resources, which are the key necessities in order to aim for internationalization, have been more possible in a trustable network relationship (Boateng et al., 2021). In addition to all of this, trust includes an emotional component that is shown when one of the actors in the network is disappointed, unsatisfied or suffered (Blois, 1999). Hence, the actors in the network relationship must have been connected by deep emotions in order to reinforce network ties. These deep emotions have inferred the closeness between the actors in the network and have become the most significant determinant of the tie strength of a network (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Accordingly, building a network with the immediate circle, such as relatives and close friends, has resulted in strong network ties between the actors (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). On the other hand, building a network with actors who are not in the firm's close circle has been considered weak network ties (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Granovetter (1973) has suggested that strong ties provide knowledge in a cheaper, more reliable and more accurate way. However, literature has shown that weak ties have also been beneficial to the network relationship. Firms have been seeking new and unique knowledge through weak ties in their networks because new actors, who are just acquaintances of the firms, have been expected to bring new knowledge (Elfring & Hulsink, 2003; Ghaffar et al., 2018). Also, strong and weak ties have been interconnected. The existence of strong ties has allowed firms to access weak ties (Jack, 2005). Furthermore, the time spent in the network

and the frequency of the interactions have also determined the tie strength. The longer and more frequent the relationships have resulted in stronger and more important networks (Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Lechner & Dowling, 2003). This type of long-term relationship has facilitated the exchange of valuable knowledge, allowed firms to develop their interactions, and lowered the risks (Li et al., 2012). Also, actors have been eager to share novel information within the network when the duration of the relationships is long (Li et al., 2012).

Whereas the strength of the network ties has been related to the exchange of knowledge, network size and the centrality of the network have focused on obtaining the knowledge and the resources easily (Kim & Fernández, 2017; Hoang & Antončič, 2003). Network size has been used for describing the entire quantity of the connections (Hoang & Antončič, 2003). Also, the size of the network has been demonstrated as a significant impact on enhancing the actors' performance. It has been easier for firms to find crucial contacts and opportunities through broader networks (Rauch et al., 2016). Additionally, network size has also determined the future of the firm's network because firms tend to start building their new network relationships from the connections of their existing networks (Demirkan et al., 2012).

Network centrality has been parallel to the network size in terms of its concept. Network centrality has been concerned about how the firm is positioned in the network (Wang et al., 2019). It has been related to the opportunity of gathering all kinds of resources, especially knowledge, via the networks of the firm's existing networks (Hoang & Antončič, 2003). Also, improvements in the relationships, which result in better exchange of resources, have been more possible when the centrality of a network is high (Powell et al., 1996). Hence, positioning the firm in the center of the network provides firms with strategic and competitive advantages and improves firms' innovation capabilities. In addition to all of these, firms have been able to have an increased image, which makes them more visible through centrality in network relationships (Powell et al., 1996). According to Freeman (1978), the centrality of the network has been assessed in three different forms. The first one is the degree of network centrality which has been used for measuring the amount of connections in the network. As mentioned above, firms have been able to enable and facilitate the exchange in the network by having more connections (Zhang & Luo, 2017). Secondly, the betweenness of the network centrality has been related to the actors that act as a mediator in the network. When the firm needs some necessities, which can be related to delivery, conversation and transaction, to interact with its counterparts in the network, the betweenness of the network centrality is expected to be high (Zhang & Luo, 2017). Moreover, closeness, which is the last form of the centrality measurement, has been related to the distance between the actors in the network relationship. Lower distances are expected to achieve higher closeness network centrality. Firms better seek to achieve high closeness of the network centrality in order to build their networks in an easier and more effective way (Zhang & Luo, 2017).

Moreover, network density, which is another component of the network structure, has been used to characterize the interdependence between the actors in the network. It has been quantified as the proportion of the firm's current ties with its networking partners to all possible ties within the network

(Chuluun et al., 2017). The network density would be high when the firm has a high level of closeness in terms of tie strength since its network has been comprised of its intimates. In dense networks, exchanging knowledge has been quicker than the other networks (Aldrich et al., 1989). However, in dense networks, firms have not been able to reach new knowledge since the knowledge and resources have been flowing inside the current network relationships (Hoang & Antončić, 2003). Hence, networks with high densities can limit the firms' innovation capabilities (Gilsing et al., 2008). However, Consensus about the impact of network density on innovation has not been achieved by the researchers in the literature. For instance, Wang et al. (2019) have suggested that dense networks contribute to the firm's innovations by fostering the trust and exchange of resources within the firm.

The final component of the network structure is the heterogeneity of the network. Heterogeneity has been described by how the firm's networks are diverse in terms of resources and information (Chuluun et al., 2017). Even though firms have achieved benefits, such as reaching diverse knowledge and increasing innovation capability, through heterogeneous networks, heterogeneity also results in unreliability due to the low trust between the actors (Chuluun et al., 2017; Shiri et al., 2015).

3.7. Dynamics of the Network Relationships

Networks cannot be conceptualized as stable structures. According to Majchrzak et al. (2014), the dynamics of the network have been related to the changes in some contexts, such as circumstances, operations and procedures within the network relationships. There are six dynamics that exist in these contexts, which are linked to the objectives of the firm, agreements between the parties, the actor's decision-making power, collaboration methods, the organizational structure of the firm and the presence of some actors within the network (Majchrzak et al., 2014). For instance, there is always a possibility that an actor in a network changes its desires and sets to accomplish. That situation would lead actors to adjust their objectives that were agreed upon by both of the parties (Majchrzak et al., 2014). Also, the transactional and interpersonal agreements between the actors can be changeable when the trustability of the network increases or decreases. For instance, actors would focus more on interpersonal agreements if their counterparts become more trustable in the network relationship (Majchrzak et al., 2014). Furthermore, literature has also shown that the number of members who have the power to make decisions will increase as time passes in the network (Majchrzak et al., 2014). Additionally, the actors will have been willing to share their knowledge as time progresses in the network (Majchrzak et al., 2014). Also, firms can create new positions and processes to facilitate the knowledge exchange within the network. Hence, the network relationships have influenced firms to change their organizational structure (Majchrzak et al., 2014). Moreover, there can be changes in the actors of the network. While some new actors can be included in the network, some of the current actors can also be removed from the network (Majchrzak et al., 2014).

The dynamic nature of the networks has impacted and, therefore, changed the actors within the network and the ties between the actors and the network structure (Ahuja et al., 2012). Ahuja et al. (2012) have defined five components - which are the actors' dispersion level, the connections between the actors, the structure of grouping the network, network density and the assortativity level of the network - that explain where the change occurred. The first component has been related to the number of ties between the actors within the network. That tie amount between the actors is changeable, and more ties bring more reputation to the actors (Ahuja et al., 2012). The second component has been considering the distance between the actors. It has been discussed that the flow of information between the actors would be faster when the distance is low (Ahuja et al., 2012). According to the third component, actors who have a high level of closeness in their network have been grouped together. There can be changes in the groups, which can result in a breakdown (Ahuja et al., 2012). The fourth component has been related to changes in the density of the network, which determines the diversity of knowledge (Ahuja et al., 2012). Finally, the assortativity level has been describing the resemblance of the actors within the networks. When the assortativity level is high, the resemblance of the actors is also high and vice versa. The situations where the resemblance of the actors is low have been defined as disassortativity. Also, while assortativity has occurred from the common goals, disassortativity has emerged from the situation in which the actors need to complement each other. Furthermore, the level of assortativity determines the resources that are needed in order to accomplish the goals (Ahuja et al., 2012). The dynamic nature of the networks should be understood by the actors of the network in order to achieve success within the network. These changes in the network have influenced the firm's business, and they require a good interpretation.

3.8. The Contributions of Network Relationships to the Internationalization Process

Firms' network relationships have been playing a crucial role in the internationalization processes. Sharma and Johanson (1987) have described networks as bridges between the firm's home country and the foreign market. It is obvious that these "bridges" have kept firms competitive and powerful in foreign markets. Networks have enabled firms to reach the required and unique resources as well as knowledge, increase their competitiveness in foreign markets, and reduce uncertainty through their business and social ties during their internationalization processes (Kiss & Danis, 2010; Sedziniauskienė et al., 2019). Also, network relationships have allowed firms to recognize the opportunities to internationalize in an effective way and, therefore, take action upon these opportunities (Sharma & Johanson, 1987). Internationalization opportunities have never appeared to the firms miraculously, networks have been the ones, especially the social ones, who provide the opportunities (Sedziniauskienė et al., 2019). Social networks have been considered vital resources for internationalization because these networks of firms or entrepreneurs are the starters of the internationalization process (Evers & O'Gorman, 2011). Ciravegna et al. (2014) have discussed that the internationalization process has been mainly carried out by the actor's social ties, so the major part of the process depends on the relationship between individuals. Also, it is known that new business networks have been built through these social networks during the firm's internationalization process (Sedziniauskienė et al., 2019). Additionally, Zain and Ng (2006) have

suggested that building a customer base in foreign markets is only possible with the right network relationship. Hence, there has not been any chance for firms that have non-eligible networks to make the right decisions and be successful in the internationalization process.

When researching the impacts of networks on internationalization processes, the effect of the firms' pre-existing networks should be addressed. Baker et al. (2003) have demonstrated that firms are mostly trusting their pre-existing ties. As mentioned above, networks have a significant role in the firm's internationalization process. The majority of these networks have been built through the firm's pre-existing network relationships. Hence, these pre-existing networks have enabled firms to reach the social ties that allow firms to internationalize easily (Vedel & Servais, 2019). Therefore, firms have become aware of the opportunities in their target market through these network relationships (Evers & Knight, 2008). In contrast, Zhang et al. (2021) have stated that the firms' existing relationships have decreased the firms' internationalization opportunities by preventing firms from building new network relationships. However, literature has mainly shown that pre-existing networks are the starting point for firms' internationalization processes.

Moreover, networks have been the fundamental building block of the internationalization process of the born globals. As it is known, born globals have been suffering from the scarcity of resources. These resources have included all kinds of tangible and intangible resources such as funding, technology, reputation, and foreign market knowledge. Born globals have been obligated to find these kinds of key resources to enter foreign markets (Li et al., 2012). Hence, the born globals have been intensively using their network relationships in order to overcome resource constraints and obtain external resources in order to internationalize successfully (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Li et al., 2012). Furthermore, born globals' pre-existing networks have enabled born globals to discover their initial start-up concepts and also created opportunities to internationalize these concepts (Sepulveda & Gabrielsson, 2013). Therefore, born globals have been seeking opportunities through their networks in order to internationalize, and the internationalization process would be faster when the born globals' counterparts in their network relationships are spread globally (Li et al., 2012). Also, network relationships have allowed born globals to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in foreign markets. However, in order to gain that sustainable competitive advantage through networks, born globals must build reciprocal, trustable and close relationships with other firms (Li et al., 2012). Through these structured relationships, born globals have also been able to position their firms in foreign markets easily, acquire the required knowledge faster, maximize the success of the internationalization process and avoid the obstacles that result from the size of the company (Li et al., 2012).

Since the internationalization process of born globals has been an entrepreneurial action, firms' networks have been built by entrepreneurs' social ties (Ling et al., 2007). Therefore, founders or entrepreneurs of the born globals should focus on the ways to benefit their existing social relationships. These social ties have provided all of the benefits mentioned above to born globals in their aim to internationalize. Ling et al. (2007) have stated that born globals are using their social ties mostly to recognize opportunities abroad. Building a strong relationship with the actors in the

social networks has been more important than having a diverse network relationship where every actor has a different characteristic and resources (Ling et al., 2007). Therefore, entrepreneurs should invest their time and effort in building strong relationships, especially trustable relationships. However, the flow of information has been restricted by some factors even though born globals have the best social relationships. These factors have been related to physical distance, cultural distance, psychic distance and language issues (Ling et al., 2007). Therefore, these factors have been preventing accurate information exchange.

4. Methodology and Data Collection Method

In this section of the thesis, the methodology of the research and the methods which will be used for obtaining the data for the data analysis part of the thesis are explained. It is obvious that, as explained in the previous sections, this thesis will be trying to reveal the effect of networks on the internationalization process and, at the same time, the effect of the internationalization process on the networks for Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry. Hence, this thesis was designed as qualitative research in order to discover the effects of networks and Turkish born globals on each other in the manufacturing industry. In this context, the phenomenology approach has been adopted in order to explore the research questions through the founders' experiences. In addition, according to Jackson et al. (2007), getting to know about individuals' experiences and drawing conclusions from these experiences is the key objective of the qualitative research design. Therefore, the interviewees' past experiences will be utilized to answer the research questions. Hence, in the light of that aim, interviews with the founders of the Turkish manufacturing born globals will be conducted.

Since the participants had to be chosen selectively, the purposeful sampling design will be used for this study. Hence, the participants and the firms should meet a couple of criteria: participants must be the founders of the company or the senior managers who have deep knowledge about the company's history and background. Also, their firms must have the characteristics of a born global firm as defined in Cavusgil and Knight (1996): firms must have set up their first international operation within the first three years after their establishment and they need to gain at least quarter of their revenues from their international operations (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; 2005). Additionally, firms must operate in the manufacturing industry. Furthermore, Turkish born global companies in the manufacturing industry have been searched according to the mentioned criteria and found through the Internet. Afterwards, the potential interviewees are contacted through e-mail.

Interviews have been defined as tools that allow people to gain more information about a specific topic through the perspectives of the selected individuals (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Additionally, according to Sewell (2008), in qualitative studies, interviews have enabled researchers to figure out the whole idea and the situation by analyzing individuals' experiences. Hence, it has been decided that conducting interviews would be the best method for the thesis. As Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) mentioned in their study, semi-structured interviews create room for researchers to dig into the topic independently while having a preplanned interview structure, and that situation allows

researchers to analyze the subject more comprehensively. Therefore, it has been decided that interviews will be conducted as semi-structured interviews in order to get to the bottom of the research. Since the target participants and their firms are located in Turkey, interviews will be held online. Therefore, all the data will be gathered through online interviews. Permission will be obtained from the participants before the interview to record the interview, and these recordings will be transcribed into text. Each interview will be held for around one hour. Furthermore, a permission letter, which was written according to Turkey's GDPR, will be sent to each of the participants. The participants will be asked to sign this permission letter before joining the interview to avoid any kind of possible misunderstandings and issues.

Once all the interviews are done, the data gathered from the founders and the senior managers of the Turkish-born global firms will be analyzed extensively. A thematic analysis will be carried out to detect the common underlined topics from the participants' responses. In this thematic analysis, a coding tree will be created in order to arrange and see the common themes within the interviews. The validity of the research will be provided by developing an advanced semi-structured interview questionnaire according to the topics mentioned in the comprehensive literature review section of the thesis. Also, the interview questionnaire was updated from interview to interview according to the experiences gained in the previous interview.

Moreover, even though the research will be conducted elaborately, there are still some limitations. Since the companies were founded in different eras of the Turkish economy, some companies may have experienced more difficulties in their internationalization processes because of the fluctuations of the Turkish economy. Hence, that factor may also have an impact on the firms' network relationships. However, this external factor will be ignored in this research. Also, some of the participants might respond to the interview questions biasedly to represent their business more successfully than in reality. As a result of this, they might skip the failure stories of their business. Furthermore, the sample size of the thesis could be considered as a limitation of the research. Due to the small sample size, the generalizability of the research could be a discussion point. However, due to the lack of time, conducting the research with big sample sizes will not be possible at all.

In conclusion, the methodology and data collection section of the thesis has shown the detailed and structured plan of the study. According to the given information in this section, it is aimed to gain considerable conclusions from the study. Even though the limitations are inescapable, it is believed that the research will have reasonable outcomes.

5. Data Analysis

This section covers the analysis of all the data gathered from the interviews. The data obtained from the founders and the senior managers of the Turkish born global companies that have been operating in the manufacturing industry will be analyzed. The data analysis begins with creating a coding tree to classify the data gathered from the interviews into common themes. In order to obtain the common themes, the interview records were first transcribed into the texts and then analyzed one

by one to analyze the themes broadly. Afterwards, each theme has been named with relevant codes. Following the coding process, the codes that share similarities have been identified to create the coding tree by adjusting the codes in a hierarchical and ordered layout. Subsequently, the themes identified in the coding tree will be examined by providing and discussing the quotes of the interviewees in order to address the research questions. The aforementioned coding trees can be found below.

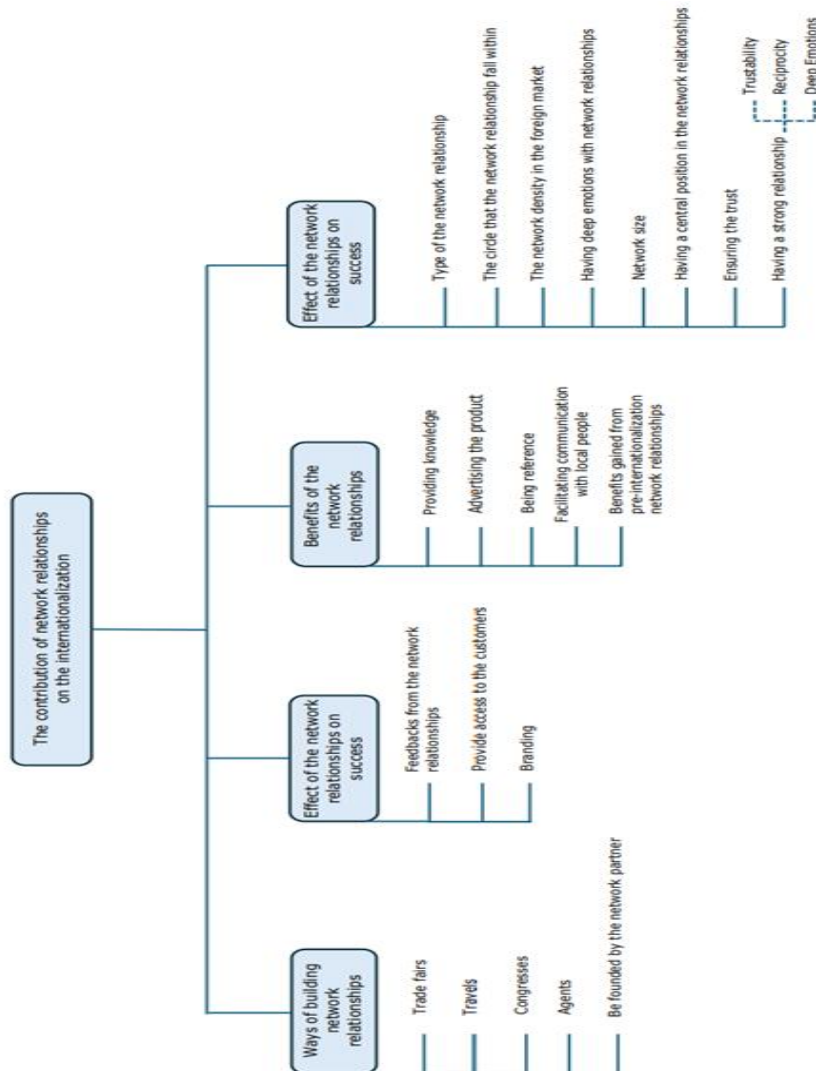


Figure 2: Coding Tree 1

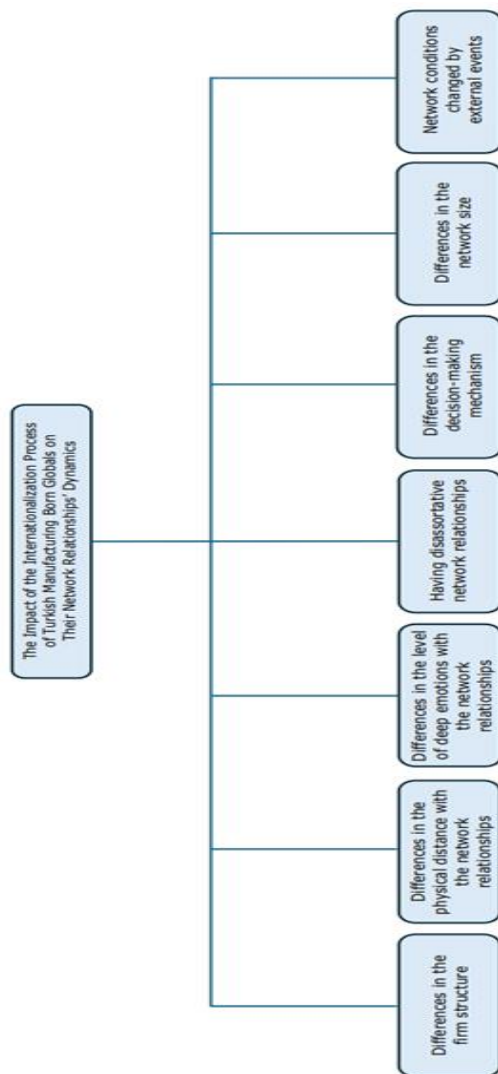


Figure 3: Coding Tree 2

As mentioned in the previous section of the thesis, the companies and the participants were selected based on certain criteria. The information about the companies and the participants is given below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Firm	Sector	Foundation Year	First International Operation	Contribution of The International Operations
Firm A	Defence	2021	2022	80%
Firm B	Health	2021	2024	75%
Firm C	Automotive	1988	1989	70%

Firm D	Health	2006	2007	50%
Firm E	Mining	2005	2005	100%
Firm F	Textile	2006	2007	60%
Firm G	Food	1994	1994	45%
Firm H	Pharmaceutical	2015	2015	60%

Table 1: Information of the Turkish manufacturing born globals included in the study

Firm	Interviewee	Job Position
Firm A	Mr. Smith	Co-founder
Firm B	Mr. Jones	Senior Manager
Firm C	Ms. Taylor	Senior Manager/ co-partner
Firm D	Mr. Davies	Co-founder
Firm E	Mr. Thomas	Founder
Firm F	Ms. Evans	Senior Manager/ co-partner
Firm G	Mr. Brown	Senior Manager
Firm H	Mr. Roberts	Founder

Table 2: Informations about the interviewees.

5.1. The Contribution of the Network Relationships of Turkish Manufacturing Born Globals on Their Internationalization Process

The network relationships have formed as a bridge for firms to have access to foreign markets in their way to internationalize (Sharma & Johanson, 1987). Hence, network relationships have been one of the most important facilitators of the internationalization processes. It can be observed that proper strategies for fast-paced internationalization, which is an important characteristic of the born global internationalization model, have been created by relying on network relationships (Belso-Martínez, 2006). The importance of the network relationships was also emphasized by the interviewees. The network was even mentioned as the most crucial component of the internationalization process:

"To start things without a network is not possible. Because, production is a complex process. People are trusting someone who they did not see or just saw for once, and they accept to buy the products.

They accept to pay high amounts of money. I do not think that it can be done without networks.”
(Ms. Evans, 2024)

“Having networks means breathing within the corporate culture. If you do not have any network relationships, you can’t do it. Networks are like stairs, like an instrument. If you cannot push the right buttons, you cannot internationalize anyway.” (Mr. Davies, 2024)

Since having network relationships is a crucial driver of the internationalization process, firms have been trying to find ways to build network relationships. Interviewees have stated various ways to build network relationships. Trade fairs were mentioned as the most common way to build network relationships. According to the conducted interviews, trade fairs have been playing a key role in building relationships but, at the same time, increasing the international recognition of the company:

“We improved our recognition by attending the fairs and meeting new people there. Everyone is seeking suppliers who offer the cheapest product that has the best quality as well. We are good at this point. So, we could build relationships fast.” (Mr. Jones, 2024)

“We are trying to join every fair and every event that we can. I am not just talking about opening a stand there. We generally do not open stands in the fairs, by the way. I am talking about going to the fairs to meet people there and have new networks. We let them know about our products, we schedule meetings with them, and then we visit them in their location with our own products. This process allows us to meet more people and have more networks.” (Ms. Evans, 2024)

“Fairs are important. You go there and build relationships and meet new people. Also, your potential networks start to trust you more when they see you more at the fairs. So, like I said, the fairs are important because they allow you to increase your popularity. Also, fairs are the places where you need to have a presence to get accepted by the sector” (Mr. Smith, 2024)

“Trade fairs are a crucial factor for us. There are hundreds of visitors at fairs, and you can get a lot of visitors if you do something different from the others. Then you meet with these people. I saw that our internationalization process was really developed in that way. In these trade fairs, some products are produced by the most advanced companies. We were bringing our products which are used for the same purpose but also have some differences. People were coming to see our products. You can get great results by first impressions when you let people touch and feel the product. Then you need to support your networks with your technical development.” (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

“A large company in Turkey was importing a particular hormone from a large company in South Korea. They came to Turkey to sell that product. We produced the same product. Then we brought that product to a fair and showed it to the visitors. Koreans were there, too. We had a price advantage, so we talked with them and made an agreement. So, we started to export our product to South Korea while one of the largest companies in Turkey was importing the same product.” (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"... you realize that there is a huge demand in Russia. So, you need to go to an international trade fair in Russia to build network relationships there." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

"I went to Kenya. I did not know anyone. I participated in a trade fair in Kenya, and we exchanged our business cards with the other firms there. They were satisfied with our products. So, we could build some other networks." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"My partner individually participated in a trade fair two years ago in the United States. Through the information gained from the networks that he had at the fair, we understood that we could sell our products more actively if we were there. So, we went there again in 2024, and we got orders before going back to Turkey through the networks that we built there." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

In some cases, ways of building network relationships have been differentiating between the firms depending on their sector. For instance, the firms that are operating in the health sector have benefited from the congresses as well. Interviewees stated that congresses are even more important than trade fairs in some situations because one part of their network relationships formed with individuals such as doctors or any medical personnel:

"The founder of the company is also a surgeon, and he knows the market of our products very well. So, he built the networks easily by attending congresses. This situation allowed us to improve faster." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"For us, building networks is more effective in congresses than in trade fairs. We participated in every congress like international brain surgery congress, cardiovascular surgery congress." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

Moreover, firms have been building their network relationships through their travels to the target markets. They have been visiting companies in foreign markets and collaborating with them. It is apparent that this way is another form of building network relationships:

"We also build our networks by visiting them. We visit the firms in their offices, facilities. We are continuously travelling for this." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We went to South Korea, Libya to meet with people. We met with hospital owners and their medical networks. Then, we started producing to meet their demands. You need to take your bag and walk away for your international expansion." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

Besides building network relationships by themselves, firms have also relied on agents. These agents find network relationships for the firms in the targeted foreign market or connect their own network relationships with the firm. Agents allow firms to have useful network relationships in foreign markets where the firm is struggling to meet with people and firms and also build the needed

relationships (Ahn et al., 2011). Some of the participants of the study have also stated that relying on the agents abroad has been an option to build network relationships in some instances:

"Since we do not have a chance to reach everywhere, agents are assembling their connections to our business. There are people who act as agents in foreign markets." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

However, this way of finding network relationships is not the preferred one. It is maybe even the least preferred way to build network relationships because it was stated that using the agents for accessing potential network relationships in the host markets has been restricting the direct communication with the network partner and improving the relationship:

"...other than that, there are agents as important constituents in the process of having networks. These agents are doing their jobs professionally. They allow us to meet new people and build our networks in the foreign market. However, we do not like to go with these agents because they are restricting us from ensuring direct communication with our networks. Also, I believe it is not an organic way to have relationships. Because, when the agents find someone cheaper than us, they are directing our partners to these firms." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

As a final way of building network relationships, firms have also been reached by other companies or individuals who want to build relationships and collaborate with the firm. Interviewees stated that their firms and products have also been demanded by some others in the foreign markets, so their firms have been founded by other firms that are operating in foreign countries:

"Turkey is a well-developed country in stonework and has improved itself in exporting stones. So, our networks found us. The ones who needed us found us" (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

"Your networks find you anyway. They are always trying to find you. So, the smart ones find you to be your network." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

Respondents' quotes about the ways of building network relationships have shown that Turkish manufacturing born globals have been bringing their products to the forefront in order to build new network relationships and, therefore, reach the opportunity of entering foreign markets. They have mainly achieved this through trade fairs. They have found the opportunity to bring their products forward, attracting multiple possible partners in different markets at the same time and increasing their recognition and brand awareness at trade fairs. Hence, it is apparent that Turkish manufacturing born globals have primarily relied on trade fairs to build network relationships. However, in some cases, congresses displace the trade fairs depending on the sector in which Turkish manufacturing globals operate. Since doctors have been one of the critical actors in the networking activities of Turkish manufacturing born globals operating in the health sector, medical congresses have become more of an issue. They have attracted doctors at medical congresses with their products and become the preferred brand for doctors. Therefore, the doctors had forced the management of their hospitals to buy the products from Turkish manufacturing born globals when

they moved to another hospital in another market. That makes Turkish manufacturing born globals have a presence in new markets. They have also built network relationships with medical firms at medical congresses. Turkish manufacturing born globals operating in the health sector have also pitched their products in foreign markets by collaborating with medical firms. Turkish manufacturing born globals have used the crowd as leverage to build as many network relationships as possible at trade fairs and congresses. In addition, firms have been visiting potential network relationship partners in targeted foreign markets and hosting them in their own facilities in order to make arrangements. They have denoted their seriousness to the potential partners through these travels and, therefore, built new network relationships. Also, local firms in foreign markets have been reaching the Turkish manufacturing born globals for supplying good quality and cheap products. They have allowed Turkish manufacturing born globals to enter new markets. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also used some agents to find and build network relationships. Using agents has not been the desired way of building network relationships for Turkish manufacturing born globals since it restricts direct communication with the network partners. Therefore, firms have been trying not to use these agents to have network relationships. However, as mentioned, it can be challenging to reach some network actors in foreign markets for Turkish manufacturing born globals due to the distance, unfamiliarity and cultural differences in certain situations. Hence, they have relied on the agents in the host markets in such circumstances.

As mentioned in the literature review section of the thesis, network relationships have been providing various benefits to the firms' international operations in foreign markets. Networks have been a strong facilitator in firms' internationalization processes (Senik et al., 2011). Turkish manufacturing born globals have also benefited from their network relationships during their internationalization process. First of all, all respondents agreed on the importance of knowledge as a valuable resource and believed that knowledge can only be gained through networks. This knowledge has been about the circumstances and dynamics of foreign markets, and it is vital for firms to direct themselves in the right direction. Turkish manufacturing born globals have been able to adjust their products in order to meet demands in particular markets, change their strategy to have a better international expansion, know competitive information through the knowledge gained by their network relationships:

"Each market has its own dynamics and needs. Our distributors analyze the customer needs in their own country and let us know about the latest trends. They inform us about the required improvements or changes in the product depending on the customer's needs. So, we can renew ourselves to increase our distributors' sales when they give the information they gathered in their own market." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We can know about everything in the world through our networks. We need to be informed about what is going on in the market." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

"We can know the situations in foreign markets through the people. We know what happens in the Ukrainian market, what happens in Eastern Europe, and what types of products are demanded by the military forces in each country." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"We cannot know everything from Turkey, but our networks provide us with information on the latest clinical products and their features. I can say that this information is really helpful to our R&D activities." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"We decide where we go in the future through our networks. For example, we understood that the Russian market will shrink in 2026 for us through the knowledge of our networks. When we evaluated all the information together, we saw that Russia will be struggling during the next two years. So, we need to find a way to get rid of the upcoming difficulties, and we see that we need to invest in America for that reason. Our main aim is to obtain as much knowledge from our networks as possible. What can I get from them?" (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We changed our strategies according to the knowledge we obtained from our relationships. Europe is no longer our main market; it is North America from now on." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We learned how much pepper seed sold to Spain from seed companies. Then we bought pepper seeds and planted them. In September, we harvested and exported them at competitive prices. All of them were possible with the knowledge that we obtained." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We ask our networks to get reactions from our competitors. Let us know their lead times, prices, product features. We ask our networks to get a demo from our competitors too." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"We received a pea order from England two days ago. However, my first goal is not to sell the peas to them. England is a large pea manufacturer in normal conditions. So, there might be some problems for them. If they are struggling with producing peas, I would be more comfortable in the American market. I have a network in the United States. I called him immediately and asked him to gather information about the market and our competitors worldwide." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We gain information about our competitors' investments from machine manufacturers. We are a significant customer for machine manufacturers. So we can learn about investments and the machines that our customers bought." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

As mentioned in the literature review section of the thesis, born globals have faced a lack of resources during their internationalization process. Hence, they have relied on their network relationships in order to reach these required resources for their international expansion. These resources can be either tangible or intangible. It can be observed through the interviews that Turkish manufacturing born globals mostly need intangible resources for their internationalization processes. The primary need as an intangible resource has been knowledge for them. It can be seen that knowledge has been considered as an essential asset and essential to have. As it is also seen in the

literature review, obtaining knowledge from network relationships has been one of the critical objectives of building network relationships. That knowledge can be broken down into two components: knowledge about foreign market dynamics and knowledge about competitors. The network partners of Turkish manufacturing born globals have analyzed the current trends in their market, demanded features, and forecasted the future situation of the market. Since these network partners have mostly been closer to the end customer, the knowledge they provide to the Turkish manufacturing firms has become more critical and, therefore, changed the operations. Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed their product features and designs according to the gathered knowledge, and they have also been forming their future strategies in foreign markets according to this knowledge. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have kept themselves informed about their competitors in the foreign market via their network relationships. Therefore, they could ensure their competitive advantage in the markets. In order to gain knowledge about their competitors' strategies, operations, and products, Turkish manufacturing born globals have benefited from their network relationships. These network relationships have gathered information from the competitors by approaching them as customers. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals have collected the information by asking the firms that sell to their competitors. Once the Turkish manufacturing born globals receive information such as the amount of raw material that their competitors bought and the amount of investment that their competitors made in machinery, they can position themselves better against their competitors in foreign markets.

Moreover, network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have been advertising the products of Turkish manufacturing born globals. Their networks have mostly been advertising the products at the trade fairs when Turkish manufacturing born globals did not have an opportunity to join the trade fair. Therefore, their products have been at trade fairs and attracted their target customers, even though the Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been there by themselves.

"Eurosatory (a famous trade fair within the defence sector) is expensive. You should not look weak there, so you need to spend more money on Eurosatory. You need to go there with resplendent stands. It would cost around fifty thousand dollars. We could not go there but I sent our product mock-ups to one of my networks who attended Eurosatory. So, everyone who went to his stand saw my products, too. He also marketed and explained my products. I sent my product's data sheets to him, and he handed them out." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"Our networks advertise our products more when we have done our job right. They brought our product to the trade fairs and showed it there." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

Turkish manufacturing born globals have also used networks as a referral system. Depending on the quality of the product and relationship, network partners have been referring Turkish manufacturing born globals to other potential customers or network relationships. That situation has facilitated firms to enter new foreign markets and expand their businesses:

"Doctors are satisfied with our products. When they move to Albania, they refer and want to use our products. Doctors are also transferring to another hospital like football players do." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"Thread manufacturers refer us to the brands in foreign markets. When brands like the quality of the threads and look for finished product manufacturers, thread manufacturers suggest us to them. Because they know how we are working." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"Our product should be assembled into another product for use. There were strong companies in Turkey that were producing that product. We had a lot of opportunities abroad when they tried and then referred our product to foreign markets." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

"We have worked with a firm in Taiwan. They suggested us to a firm in India. Then, that Indian firm contacted us." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"International networks are increasing our possibility of being known all over the world." (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"When our network started telling our name in the sector, we started to participate more in trades in the sector." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

The above-stated data has demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals have benefited from their network relationships to increase their recognition and brand awareness through their network partners' reputations. This reputation was described by Li et al. (2012) as one of the intangible resources that born globals obtain from the network actors. Hence, it can be said that the network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have contributed to their internationalization process by providing a good reputation, as stated in the literature review. The Turkish manufacturing born globals have taken advantage of their network relationships' reputation by using them as references and promoters.

Moreover, networks have also been beneficial in overcoming the language barriers in foreign markets. It is obvious that Turkish born globals need local network relationships that facilitate communication with other actors in a particular market. Besides the language, networks of Turkish manufacturing born globals have also made Turkish manufacturing born globals more localized in foreign markets:

"I had to know German in order to sell my products to Company X (anonymized). I had to know German laws. I had to know German trade rules. However, I did not know any of them. My network provided all of them to me in Germany. Thanks to him, I was able to be the supplier of Company X." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

"Russia is a difficult market in terms of language and reaching people. So, our networks who know Russian and have knowledge about Russia help us in the Russian market." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

As it is also stated in the literature review, the information flow has been partially blocked by some factors. Language has been one of the factors that firms need to overcome in order to ensure the flow of information. Turkish manufacturing born globals have also faced the difficulties of different languages. Therefore, since they have needed to adopt the culture of the foreign market in which they have a presence and localize themselves there, they have benefited from their network relationships with those local in that particular market. They have overcome the language barrier in the foreign markets in this way.

Freeman et al. (2010) have stated that the pre-internationalization networks of born globals have contributed to the firms' fast-paced internationalization processes by allowing them to reach the required knowledge. Therefore, born globals have benefited from their pre-internationalization networks at the beginning of their internationalization processes. However, this has not always been the case for Turkish manufacturing born global firms. Turkish manufacturing born globals have only leveraged their internationalization processes with their pre-internationalization networks when their founders have prior experience in the same sector. Also, these pre-internationalization networks have played a key role in the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals. The internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have been accelerated and facilitated by their pre-internationalization networks of them. Firms have reached some opportunities for international expansion through these network relationships. Also, these pre-existing network relationships have contributed to Turkish manufacturing born globals' vision of internationalization. On the other hand, some of the interviewees stated that they did not benefit from their pre-existing network relationships because of the absence of commercial culture in Turkey, and their pre-internationalization networks did not have any international relationships:

"The company's founder is a surgeon who uses these medical products. He is a respected person in this sector. He attended international congresses. He is also a member of some institutions and a board member of some of them. So, he started the business while he already had networks. It also made the international expansion fast and easy." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"The resources of our exporting activities and our knowledge came from the founders' prior experiences and prior relationships." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"There was a guy who was exporting the products to Germany at the firm where I had worked before. I have known him since that time. After 1 or 2 years of working, I quit and founded my own business. He also quit the job and made his way. However, we stayed in contact with him. One day, we saw each other at a trade fair, and I asked him: "Why do you buy from someone else instead of us?". He asked us to see our facilities. We invited him to our factory, and he told us he did not work with us because we were not enough to meet the demand. However, he saw our developments and

wanted to collaborate with us. We have been working together in the German market since that time.” (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

“One of the founders had a good relationship with the buyer of the firm where he worked before. Nobody was ordering our products when we were new in the sector. So, we contacted the buyer, and he made his company accept to work with us even though we did not have certain qualifications. Then, we started our exporting activities with his help.” (Ms. Evans, 2024)

“The networks that founders had from their prior jobs explained the importance of exporting; they can find reliable money outside and improve themselves faster with exporting.” (Ms. Evans, 2024)

“The relationships that we knew before the beginning of our international operations had no contribution to our international recognition. Turkey has an insufficient environment for this. This commercial culture does not exist in Turkey. They just cannot understand the benefits they would get when the sector grows.” (Mr. Smith, 2024)

“Our prior relationships did not have any contacts in foreign markets. So we could not benefit from them.” (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

In the literature review section, it is mentioned that firms have mostly benefited from their pre-existing network relationships. In connection with what is stated in the literature review, Turkish manufacturing born globals have built new network relationships to make a contribution to the internationalization process through their pre-existing network relationships and also used their pre-existing network relationships as a starting point of the internationalization process. These pre-existing network relationships have brought Turkish manufacturing born globals to new critical network relationships in foreign markets and have also enabled the first internationalization activity. Additionally, as an analysis not stated in the literature review, the pre-existing network relationships of the Turkish manufacturing born globals have shaped the motivation of firms to internationalize by explaining the advantages of internationalization. However, all these benefits of pre-existing relationships have been effective only in the case that the founders of the Turkish manufacturing born globals have prior experience in the sector. If they do not have any prior experiences, their pre-existing network relationships have not been effective in their internationalization process. Additionally, as Zhang et al. (2021) suggested, pre-existing network relationships have prevented Turkish manufacturing born globals from building new network relationships and recognition, therefore negatively impacting their international expansion. This issue has occurred due to the insufficient commercial culture of the Turkish market. It can be said that the pre-existing relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have only been beneficial when the founders have enough background in the related sector.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, building network relationships has been vital for the internationalization processes. Success in the process of international expansion can be achieved through the guidance of network relationships (Coviello & Munro, 1997). The network relationships

have enabled the firms' accessibility to customers in foreign markets and, therefore, increased sales. Turkish manufacturing born globals have been recognized by other actors in foreign markets through these networks. This situation has also provided international success to the firms. Turkish manufacturing born globals have also ensured their international success through the feedback obtained from their network relationships. In order to achieve success, they have updated their strategies or improved their weaknesses through this feedback. The network relationships have made firms brands in the international markets. That branding process has brought success to the Turkish manufacturing born globals in the international areas. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also considered firms as a key driver of success in foreign markets:

"The most critical thing is the number of good relationships, the number of sustainable relationships for achieving success. Revenue is a misleading factor. Building appropriate relationships is important." (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"Our networks are increasing our order quantities or helping us to ensure product quality. They are effectively and positively affecting our success because we have a costly business, and it is not an easy business." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"The manufacturing firms should have many networks because the wheel of the factory should not stop. Factories should always be in producing goods and actively selling them. There should always be orders because we have to supply raw materials even though we do not have any orders. Therefore, we have to introduce ourselves to foreign markets through our networks and increase our recognition." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We assess our success through the feedback gathered from our networks. The thing that makes us successful is the growth of the firm that we sell our products to. If that firm cannot grow, it either buys the wrong products or sells the right products in the wrong market. So, we give them some strategies based on the feedback from our other networks. This affects our sales and growth." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We try to receive feedback from our networks. If we are faced with negative feedback, we look for its cause." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

"It is important to have networks for international success. Our networks are branding our products, and so they are becoming a demanded product in foreign markets. Then everyone becomes racing against each other to work with you. Hence, our networks are increasing our brand value." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

The above-stated quotes have demonstrated that the internationalization success of Turkish manufacturing born globals comes with sustainable business in the foreign markets rather than any monetary indicator. Hence, they have relied on sustainable network relationships in order to bring success to their internationalization processes. Since the Turkish manufacturing born globals have

to produce products consistently, they have not expected success in one-time profits even though they get massive profits. Therefore, their network relationships have contributed to the success of the internationalization process by providing sustainability. Also, the Turkish manufacturing born globals have achieved success in their internationalization processes by having a good brand name in the international arena. Their products have become preferred when they build a better brand name in foreign markets, and they have been able to build a better brand name in foreign markets through their network relationships. Apart from these determinants of the internationalization success of Turkish manufacturing born globals, the last determinant that mentioned in the interviews was also mentioned in the literature review section of the thesis. The ability to respond to changes in demands and adverse reactions about the products has also been bringing internationalization success to Turkish manufacturing born globals. They have been able to take action in the dynamic structure of the internationalization process through the valuable feedback of their network relationships.

Turkish manufacturing born globals have relied on some characteristics of their network relationships during their international expansion. Some particular network characteristics have accelerated internationalization and made it easy. First of all, Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly relied on their social networks in their operations in foreign markets. Even though the international operations have been concluded between the firms, the facilitators of the expansion to the foreign markets have been individuals. Also, since the firms did not have any business-related relationships at the beginning of their foundation, their social networks have been vital for international expansion in most cases (Evers & O’Gorman, 2011). Turkish manufacturing born globals believe that individuals have mostly been the key actors in their internationalization process:

"There is a guy between us and the German firm. We would not have been able to reach the German firm without that guy. He prompted us to get into the German market." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

"The relationship with buyers is really crucial to our business. Our relationship with them is really valuable for us and also works a lot, especially when they move to another brand." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"Our relationships with the firms are weak without having any social connections. People work with someone they know." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"People collaborate with each other instead of firms. People should improve their relationships with people instead of firms. There is no chance to stay professional in the case of relationship breakdowns between people. Doing business does not always rely on logic. It generally relies on some spiritual relationships. So, we build monetary content friendship relations within the framework of respect. Here, it is important to work devotedly. Because that devotion of the person also represents the firm. Actually, there is no such thing as a firm; there is only a person. And everyone knows that problems will arise when the contact person changes. If we do not trust the person, we

do not work with her firm. Because the firm of an unreliable person will also be unreliable.” (Mr. Smith, 2024)

“For instance, we explain our product to a leader. We understand her needs and offer some solutions to her. We talk with her day and night. Then she forces her firm to be interested in our products.” (Mr. Smith, 2024)

In connection with what has been discussed by Ciravegna et al. (2014), Turkish manufacturing born globals have carried out their internationalization process through social network relationships instead of business networks. They believed that international trade was only possible through relationships between individuals. As Sedziniauskiene et al. (2019) have also suggested, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also relied on their social ties to build new network relationships for their international operations. They have strengthened their relationships with individuals in order to achieve what they desire in their internationalization processes. Even though Turkish manufacturing born globals have required business relationships for their international expansion, they first have benefited from their social relationships to effectively use the business relationships.

Additionally, the network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have comprised the ones that are out of the close circle. They have not benefited from their close circle during their internationalization process. They have avoided any undocumented transactions by not being in a relationship with their close circle. Firms have been willing to rely on documentation due to trust issues. Also, since they did not know anyone in their close circle who had a presence in the same sector, they built their network relationships with new people:

“In the foreign markets, we are in relationships with someone we did not know before. We built formal relationships by having formal communications. These network relationships generally pay with cash instead of cheques and bills. So the payment is better with them. This is what we prefer as a manufacturing firm.” (Mr. Jones, 2024)

“There is no nepotism in the international operations. Everything is documented. There is an agreement at the beginning. This brings the spotless job. So, we do not have any concerns about selling our products or receiving our money. We make agreements that we know all the clauses. So we feel comfortable in exporting. International rules are valid in exporting.” (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

“Our families are not well-known families that are interested in commerce. We are sons of working-class families who have an average wage. So, our new relationships have brought us somewhere. We got somewhere through these new people.” (Mr. Smith, 2024)

“We produce an engine component which is a really specific product. There is no engine production in Turkey so we cannot benefit from the people who we see each other constantly. Since they are not related to our sector, we cannot take any advantage of them.” (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

The quotes of the interviewees have proven that Turkish manufacturing born globals have benefited more from their weak social ties, which are out of the founders' close circle during the internationalization process, as Granovetter (1973) has discussed in his article. They have been able to build more trustable and effective network relationships when they go out from their close circle.

Another specified characteristic of network relationships that was emphasized by the interviewees was network density. Interviewees have stated opposite views on this characteristic. Some interviewees collaborated with as few network relationships as possible in a particular foreign market, while the rest spread their international operations to many network relationships. The ones who believe that gathering international operations in one network relationship is the best way of international expansion have relied on building trust and closeness with their network relationships and also ensuring their convenience in foreign markets. They have stated that this is the optimum way of effectively using network relationships. On the other hand, the rest of the Turkish manufacturing born globals have had concerns about risk-related contents. Therefore, they have been relying on spreading the risks to different actors in foreign markets by trying to have different network relationships for each international operation:

"We make agreements with one or two loyal distributors in each country, and we do not look for more networks in that country. So, we host fewer firms because everything is clear, we know who will buy from us, and we can have more comfortable meetings with each other. We can have more experienced feedback. Since our network allocates more budget and devotes more time and effort to our business, our renewal process is easier with her feedback." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"There is a product and a business. We do not want to use anyone else in this process because that person is also used by some others. So, we do not want to get in the crowd. Maybe this is not the professional way to do it, but we feel more comfortable doing it." (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"We use one network in the foreign market. We believe and trust him. We always see the benefits of that." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We work with different networks in a particular market because we want to spread the risk. We cannot know what will happen tomorrow. Our network may find someone else instead of us, problems may arise between us from nowhere, or both of us can make some mistakes which harm our relationship. So, for us, it is better to have more networks because we do not want to let everything get damaged when something goes wrong." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"We prefer to have different networks in each market. We are hedging the risk. I believe that. We are really fragile as a Turkish company. We think that we earn too much money, and then suddenly, we lose it all." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

According to the interviews, it can be said that there is no clear common idea about the appropriate level of network density for the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals.

They have avoided any trust issues between the network partners that can make the internationalization process inefficient by having a high level of network density. In line with the article written by Aldrich et al. (1989), Turkish manufacturing born globals have made the exchange of knowledge efficient through their dense network relationships. However, there have also been concerns about having a dense relationship. Turkish manufacturing born globals have avoided having a high level of dense network relationships when they feel that it is risky. That risk has also been related to trust issues. Turkish manufacturing born globals believe that they will lose everything if they have a high level of density in their network relationships.

Interviewees also emphasized the importance of having deep emotions within network relationships. These kinds of network relationships have ignored some small mistakes of Turkish manufacturing born globals and, therefore, made them comfortable during international operations. Additionally, having deep emotions with the network has been allowing Turkish manufacturing born globals to keep the relationship active. On the other hand, it has been not easy to exit from these network relationships when the actors are close to each other in terms of emotions:

"We know that our networks do not consider things only commercial. We also tolerate each other's faults more easily. For instance, we do not terminate the agreement in case of a crisis, or someone does not fulfil her responsibility. So, close relationships allow us to step out of the line." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"If our mistake does not cause a major defect, that mistake can be ignored by our networks with whom we have a good relationship. When they see a missing part in the product, they do not make this a problem, and they explain the situation to the customer for us. They give us time to make the recovery." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"I believe that emotional relationships are so important. Showing concern for our networks, asking how they are doing even if there is no gain, and keeping in touch with them allows us to benefit from them whenever it is needed. It is really important to know that it will be possible to be in contact maybe five years later even though nothing will happen this year or the next year." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"Since you like your networks emotionally and feel grateful for their prior contributions, removing the network can be difficult when it becomes useless." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

According to the interviews conducted, it can be observed that Turkish manufacturing born globals have taken advantage of emotionally close network relationships in their internationalization process. They have built those relationships by being a friend instead of a regular partner.

Moreover, Turkish manufacturing born globals have cared about having larger network size since they have been able to gain more information from a great number of network relationships. Also, they were able to check the information against each other when they got the information from

multiple sources. However, the capacity of the firm should meet the networks' needs. The responsibilities have also been increasing for Turkish manufacturing born globals while they are increasing their network size, and this situation may cause unfavourable situations:

"We can understand what is right and what is wrong by comparing the information we get from multiple networks. This allows us to see the possibility of taking the job by knowing the details of the job. Because not every network gives information of the same quality, we also can understand who is going to collaborate with us and who is trying to collaborate with our competitors." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"You can receive too much misleading information. So, we ask for the same information from more than one network. Then, we decide by comparing the information to see if it concurs." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"We do sixty meetings a day when we join a private fair. It is easier for us to make the right decision with all the information gathered from these sixty meetings." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"If you have high capacity, it is advantageous to have more networks. However, if you do not have high capacity, it might be disadvantageous to have a lot of networks because you take the order but cannot produce or deliver the products on time. It all depends on your capacity. Our capacity is enough for our networks." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

It is obvious that having a large network size has been advantageous for Turkish manufacturing born globals in their internationalization processes. However, the contribution of the larger network size to the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals is different from what was explained in the literature review section of the thesis. Turkish manufacturing born globals have used the advantage of their large network size to reach accurate and reliable knowledge about foreign markets.

Turkish manufacturing born globals have also stated that having a central position in the network has made the firm valuable as a network partner in the network relationships. In other words, having high levels of network centrality has made Turkish manufacturing born globals preferred by the current and potential network relationships and made them a top priority. They have located themselves in an indispensable position within the network relationship by having the network centrality. Also, firms with high levels of network centrality feel confident within the network relationship:

"We have a distributor in Egypt. We provide products for him, but his competitors also want to buy from us. We host them in our facilities and show them our manufacturing processes but do not make an agreement with them. This situation increases our brand awareness even if we do not sell our products to them. So, if we lose our distributor in the market, we can find a new one easily. There is certainly someone who wants to come to the throne." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We are not the kind of a partner that will be left easily. Problems can arise between the end customer and our network in each supply chain issue. For this reason, our network has to find a solid supplier. This is not a one-time job. It needs to be sustainable. These people want to work with a solid supplier. They do not care about buying the product one or two euros cheaper. It is not an important factor for them. They care about having someone who constantly gives the product to them. They care about having a sustainable relationship." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

"I know that my network in Russia cannot buy products anywhere in the world other than me. So, he cannot leave me. My Canadian network also knows that my Russian network is a big buyer of my products. So, I feel more confident when I sit across from him, and I benefit from it." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"You can buy whatever is on the shelf from the seller. But we can put the project into practice and produce different models here. We can produce tailored products. Titanium comes here and goes as platinum. We can produce whatever is demanded. So our network has to contact us when something different is demanded. Every work she gets must come to us." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

According to the above-stated quotes, having a central position in the network relationships has increased the Turkish manufacturing born globals' strategic and competitive advantages in their internationalization processes, as was also discussed in the literature review. Additionally, as Powell et al. (1996) have also discussed, Turkish manufacturing born globals have a better exchange of resources, especially knowledge, in the network relationships in which the Turkish manufacturing born globals have a high level of network centrality.

Interviewees have also stated that trust is the most vital component of network relationships. Both parties should build and ensure trust within the network relationship to have better relationships in the foreign markets. This trust is mostly related to the quality of the product and transactions:

"Sometimes there may be trust issues for our new networks. They sometimes worry about receiving the product in time after they paid for it or getting the expected quality from the product. We are trying to reduce these worries. We invite them to our factory and show them our production processes, like how we produce our products, and how we pack the products. We build trust while doing everything transparent." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"Trust is the most critical factor in any relationship. There is a belief in our networks that every problem will be solved fairly. They know that we will not fool them. They are sure that we will refund their money and send two good quality products back if they receive a poor quality product from us. We also trust them. We know that they will send our money and also do all the required documentation in their country without any delay. Face-to-face interactions and commercial and creating a commercial and technical environment are at the bottom of building the trust." (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"Can you stand behind your product? Can you ensure the trust within your relationship? Did you design and run the product in the right way? Your networks are willing to work with you and buy from you if you can provide this confidence to your networks. Because they spend money on it". (Mr. Smith, 2024)

The above-stated quotes have demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals need to ensure and maintain trust within their network relationships to make the maximum contribution from the network relationships during the internationalization process. These trustable relationships have been built by the Turkish manufacturing born globals over time, order by order.

Moreover, interviewees mentioned three factors while they were talking about strong network relationships. These factors are trustability, reciprocity, and deep emotions with the partners. Also, it is observed that the interviewees emphasized trustability and reciprocity more than having deep emotions with the partners while they were describing their strong network relationships. However, mostly, Turkish manufacturing born globals have associated their strong network relationships with the three factors mentioned above:

"I had a strong relationship with someone in the United States. An environment of trust was formed between us. We bid for Company Y's (anonymized) tender together. Then, we gave our products to Company Y until the middle of 2023. We could do this thanks to our network. Since we have been working together for years, he feels the trust more than anyone else. That is why he can take us to Company Y and refer us." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"Growing together, taking the steps together, gaining together make the relationship strong. It is simply a win-win strategy. They buy the products from us and sell them. They do not have trouble with the products. So they gain and allow us to gain. Also, they do not buy the products from someone else as a loyal network." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"We have a network in Vietnam. We have built really strong ties with that network during the past seven years, which allows us to bend the rules sometimes. We also receive a lot of support from them out of work. We are like a family." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

Turkish manufacturing born globals have strengthened their network relationships in order to reach more opportunities in foreign markets. These strong network ties have also allowed Turkish manufacturing born globals to grow constantly in the international arena. They have built these strong network relationships by focusing on ensuring trustable, reciprocal and emotional ties as stated in the literature review section of the thesis.

5.2. The Impact of the Internationalization Process of Turkish Manufacturing Born Globals on Their Network Relationships' Dynamics

The internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has affected their network relationships as much as the network relationships affected their internationalization process. Sometimes, the dynamics of the network relationships can be changed purposely by the actors, and sometimes, these dynamics can be changed unavoidably during international expansion. Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed some components which affect their network dynamics to improve the relationships and make them more effective depending on the development of the internationalization process, or just the internationalization process has led the network dynamics to be changed either in a positive or negative way.

First of all, Turkish manufacturing born globals have increased the possibility of their network relationships being affected by external events while they continuously expand their business into foreign markets. These external events have typically been wars, changes in the documentation rules, diplomatic crises, boycotts and natural disasters. Network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have stayed inactive during external events or even broken down. Therefore, it can be said that the external events have affected the network dynamics of the firms negatively in most cases:

"The wars are breaking out in specific geographies, and these affect our network relationships negatively—for example, wars in Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel. We are working with networks in each country. The Russian embargo or any kind of diplomatic crisis affects our business and our relationships. Some countries can stop buying from outside when they get into a war. So, unusual situations can arise. A natural disaster can happen. For instance, there was a recent flood in Brazil, and some of our relationships were affected by the flood. No matter how good we are at our business, the geological and political situations affect our trading." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"There can be embargoes and wars in the country. That makes our merchandise trade end. For instance, our relationships in Syria, Iran, Morocco, and Israel are over at the moment." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"Since our business is strategic, governments allow trade depending on their relationship. For instance, something happens, and the government of the United States forbids their firms from selling to Turkey. They are putting constraints on us." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"Many conditions are out of your control, which can negatively affect the group you benefit from. So, you are trying to get rid of these conditions when you start to get harmed." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

"A regulation can be changed about medical products, and that regulation can require different certificates from us. So, we need to design the product from scratch, change our layout and apply this to all of our networks." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

There have been changes in the network size of the Turkish manufacturing born globals as their internationalization grows. The firms have required new network relationships when they decided to expand their business into more markets, or they have required new actors in their current network relationships:

"We continue our meetings with the former buyer of Company Y (anonymized) at the moment to build a new network to make our relationship with Company Y more solid and reliable. This will be our new network." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"First, our business volume has increased, our product portfolio has changed, and our contacts have increased." (Mr. Roberts, 2024)

"We had more distributors during our international expansion." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"Our networks and the people in our circle of trust are increasing as our exporting operations are increasing." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

Moreover, the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has forced them to rely on disassortativity. They have structured their network relationships with the actors that act as complementary. Interviewees have stated that they have required network relationships that have different resources than themselves:

"We found firms that share the same dream with us. We did not find the firms that look like us, but we found someone who adopted our vision and mission." (Mr. Jones, 2024)

"The one who can reach the same resources and produce in the same style as me has always been a competitor for me. I have not visited brands abroad and collaborated with them during my internationalization. It would not be logical." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

Moreover, the development of the internationalization process has provided opportunities for Turkish manufacturing born globals to build deep emotions in their network relationships. In other words, Turkish manufacturing born globals were able to have close relationships with their networking partners by improving themselves in internationalization. However, they have also not been able to treat everyone the same while their international expansion is increasing. Firms have been choosing the most valuable networks and treating them more closely:

"Our relationships have been extremely improved with our internationalization. We have become a family." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

"We had commercial relationships at first, but then our commercial relationships transformed into social relationships. Friendships began to form. These friendships have always continued and helped us." (Mr. Brown, 2024)

"You cannot show your interest to everyone when you start selling products to more relationships. It is a disadvantage in growth. However, everything begins to work out when you display your flirtatious side to your biggest relationship." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

The internationalization process has also been making the Turkish manufacturing born globals physically close to their network relationships. In other words, the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has forced them to decrease the physical distance with their network relationships abroad:

"We are getting closer to our networks. The one who wants to have growth in the United States and Europe and wants to sell more products to more people has to set up an office there. If that country wants you to produce the products there, you have to produce some of them in that country." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"We are a member of an association. We established a company in England with six other firms that are different from each other in the association to find brands in England, build relationships with them and carry out marketing operations there." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"I established my own company in Germany. I deliver my products to my other company in Germany. Then I sell them to my network in Germany." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

The internationalization process has also caused differences in the structure of Turkish manufacturing born globals. Turkish manufacturing born globals have created new positions in their organizations and changed their employee profile in order to be more effective within their network relationships. They have required these changes with the development of international expansion. Additionally, the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has forced them to improve themselves in order to be the right partner for their network relationships:

"We used to handle two or three relationships with a few people. We are still few but handle ten relationships. These relationships will be fifteen, then twenty. Since this number is increasing, we need to be able to manage the relationships, continue communication, analyze the needs and ensure sustainability. We need to do these in a systematic structure. So, we changed to new positions." (Mr. Smith, 2024)

"Internationalization makes us change our employee profile. You need employees who know foreign languages if you are exporting products. We expect everyone in our organization to know English. That leads to some changes in the firm structure." (Ms. Evans, 2024)

"Internationalization had an effect on our corporate culture. We improved ourselves in each process. We updated ourselves from the most basic surface finishing process to information in our proforma." (Mr. Davies, 2024)

"We improved our business and became a desired supplier for our networks. For instance, we did not care that much about labour rights at the beginning, but now we do care about them." (Mr. Thomas, 2024)

Finally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed their decision mechanisms for international operations as international expansion increased. The decisions have been made by the top management with the widening of the internationalization activities:

"The decisions have been made by the top management when the network is extended, and the scope of the commercial relationship is extended with the internationalization." (Ms. Taylor, 2024)

It can be observed that the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have brought external events. These external events have shown up when least expected from the network actors. Therefore, the dynamics of the network relationships have been affected by these external events. These external events have mostly resulted in the loss of network relationships in the markets where external events happened. Additionally, internationalization processes have also increased the network size of the Turkish manufacturing born globals. The internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have forced them to have more network relationships in order to use the opportunities in the foreign markets. Furthermore, the Turkish manufacturing born globals have looked for relationships that complement their businesses in the international arena. Therefore, they have built new network relationships that have different resources and needs as internationalization has developed.

As has also been discussed in the literature review, having deep emotions within the network relationship has been beneficial for each actor in the network relationship. However, these deep emotions have to be formed. According to the conducted interviews, it can be observed that the development of the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has been shown as a facilitator of increasing the emotional closeness with their network partners. Internationalization processes have also made Turkish manufacturing born globals physically close to their network relationships. One reason for decreasing the distance has been facilitating coordination and reaching the right network relationships. The other reason has come from nationalist thinking in some countries. Turkish manufacturing born globals have been asked to move their manufacturing operations partially to the country in which their network relationship operates. Therefore, it can be said that the internationalization process has also changed the physical distance between the Turkish manufacturing born globals and their network relationships.

Moreover, the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals has forced them to adjust their firm structure in order to be more effective in their network relationships. These adjustments covered the organizational structure, corporate culture, and employee profile. Additionally, as the internationalization process has developed, Turkish manufacturing born globals have needed to change their decision-makers regarding the situations in their network relationships because their internationalization processes have become more severe and vital for their business

over time. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals needed to make major decisions when the internationalization process was developed. Hence, they have decided to make decisions with their top management.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data that was analyzed. These analyzed data have shown that Turkish manufacturing born globals have built their network relationships in several ways and supported them with some characteristics that make them more effective in other countries. Additionally, network relationships have played a vital role for Turkish manufacturing born globals in their way of internationalizing and in their success in internationalization. Also, there is no clear consensus about the contribution of the prior network relationships to the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals. Furthermore, the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have surely changed the dynamics of their network relationships. The data which was analyzed will be elaborately discussed in the following sections.

6. Discussion

The results from the analyzed data have displayed a significant understanding into the circular relationship between the network relationships and the internationalization process of the Turkish manufacturing born globals. In light of these understandings, this section will dig into the explanation and the interpretation of the analyzed data for each research question.

6.1 How do networks of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect their internationalization activities?

It is obvious that network relationships have been the most helpful facilitator for the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals. These network relationships can be considered vital resources since the Turkish manufacturing born globals have been entirely dependent on their network relationships in each era of their internationalization process. They have mostly built their network relationships through face-to-face interactions. They have mostly attracted new potential network relationships by showing their products at trade fairs, congresses and travels. Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly relied on trade fairs to build recognition and, therefore, new network relationships that can be used in the internationalization process. However, in some situations, congresses have affected Turkish manufacturing born globals' new network acquisition process more significantly depending on the sector in which Turkish manufacturing born globals operate. So, it can be said that Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly been in crowded events to attract multiple potential network relationships with their cheap but also high-quality products. The network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have been able to buy the demanded products from Turkish manufacturing born globals while bearing the minimum cost and perceiving the optimum quality. Therefore, the Turkish manufacturing born globals could easily build network relationships in order to expand their business internationally. They have also travelled to their target markets and visited their potential network relationships there. Hence, besides the features of their products, they have shown their seriousness to the

potential network relationships and, therefore, easily built relationships with them. Additionally, Since the Turkish manufacturing born globals have provided the products in optimum conditions, they have also been reached by the potential network relationships in the foreign markets. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have struggled to build network relationships in some particular foreign markets. Therefore, they have relied on some agents to have the needed network relationships in order to improve their internationalization process. However, even though the agents have been necessary for some foreign markets for Turkish manufacturing born globals, they have been the least preferred and inefficient way to build network relationships for their internationalization processes.

The Turkish manufacturing born globals have benefited from their network relationships in various ways for their internationalization processes. As Li et al. (2012) have also suggested in their article, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also used their network relationships in order to overcome some resource-related barriers during their internationalization processes. However, Turkish manufacturing born globals have only used intangible resources of their network relationships in their internationalization processes even though the literature has stated that the born globals have used both tangible and intangible resources of their network relationships. It can be said that knowledge has been the most crucial resource that Turkish manufacturing born globals have needed in their internationalization processes and obtained from their network relationships. Since the Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been located in each foreign market, they have not been able to access information about the dynamics of the markets without their network relationships. Additionally, they have been obtaining the information of their competitors through their network relationships. Hence, they could decide on the appropriate strategy for ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage during their internationalization process. They have always adjusted their internationalization strategies according to the knowledge they obtained from their network relationships. Therefore, knowledge has been considered a vital asset by Turkish manufacturing born globals. However, obtaining knowledge has not been an easy process for Turkish manufacturing born globals. Since they have had to provide knowledge to their network relationships, the optimum way of gathering knowledge from their network relationships has been gaining as much knowledge as possible while providing knowledge to their network relationships at a minimum level. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have benefited from the reputation of their network relationships while expanding their business into foreign markets. When Turkish manufacturing born globals build a network relationship with a well-known partner internationally, they get the opportunity to raise their brand names in foreign markets. Due to economic difficulties and visa obligations, Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been able to promote their products in foreign markets in some situations. The network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have promoted the products in the foreign markets for Turkish manufacturing born globals. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have increased their recognition through their network relationships reputation. Also, when the network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals are satisfied with the product, they start talking about the Turkish manufacturing born globals and referring the products to others. This situation has also contributed to the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals by making

them a well-known brand in the international arena. In addition, the network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have closed the cultural gap between Turkish manufacturing born globals and the other stakeholders. Since Turkish manufacturing born globals have been operating in multiple markets, they have not been able to understand the languages of each country. Therefore, they have overcome the language barriers in the foreign markets with the contribution of their network relationships. It might be costly to solve the language issues in each foreign market without having local network relationships. Ultimately, the Turkish manufacturing born globals have used their network relationships in their internationalization process in order to obtain knowledge from them, benefit from their reputation and close the cultural distance in the foreign markets. They have been increasing their brand awareness in the international arena through the contribution of their network relationships.

Moreover, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been maximizing the benefits that they have gained from their network relationships by relying on some particular characteristics in their network relationships. The network relationships have been built, maintained and carried out by individuals instead of companies. These kinds of social relationships have been more beneficial to the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals. Indeed, they have also had to build some business relationships too. However, these business relationships have not been built without the existence of any social relationships. This situation can be explained by the commercial culture in Turkey. Individuals have remained at the forefront of any kind of relationship in Turkish commercial culture. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also carried out their international operations with the individual actors in their network relationships. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly benefited from the network relationships that are out of their close circle. Instead of what has been discussed in the strength of weak ties theory by Granovetter (1973), Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly relied on their nonclose circle in their internationalization processes due to some trust concerns. They have not trusted the international operations that have been done with the contributions of their close circle since they have not been making any formal agreements with their close circle. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have preferred to be in a network relationship with their nonclose circle since everything is documented. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been emotionally close with their network relationships in order to maximize the effectiveness of their network relationships in their internationalization process. Turkish manufacturing born globals have been creating a comfortable space for their international operations and facilitating resource exchange. This emotional relationship has also allowed Turkish manufacturing born globals to make some mistakes. Moreover, it can be observed that trust has been a priority for all actors within the network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been trying to ensure trust within the commercial relationship since the beginning of the relationship. As it was discussed earlier in the thesis, the network relationships have been the most crucial and helpful driver of the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals. However, Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been able to benefit from their network relationships until they provide the desired level of trust. Therefore, it has been essential to ensure trust to benefit from network relationships for Turkish manufacturing born globals in their

internationalization processes. In addition, Turkish manufacturing born globals have also benefited from loyal network relationships in foreign markets. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals have depended on one loyal network relationship in a particular foreign market for all of their international operations in that market. However, if the Turkish manufacturing born globals have not had any loyal network relationships in the targeted market, they have been hedging the risk by using multiple network relationships for each of their international operations in that targeted market. Therefore, it can be said that the appropriate level of network density has been determined by the presence of loyal network relationships in the foreign market. Turkish manufacturing born globals have been maximizing the contribution of their network relationship to their internationalization processes according to the presence of loyal network relationships.

Turkish manufacturing born globals prefer to have as many network relationships as possible for their internationalization processes. Since they have had to make big decisions during their internationalization processes, they need to be sure about the strategy that they have chosen. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been looking for as much knowledge as possible. They have been able to get more information for specific markets from their network relationships and, therefore, build the most suitable strategy for those markets. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been trying to have larger network sizes to grow their internationalization processes.

Moreover, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been trying to position themselves at the center of their network relationships in order to gain an advantage within the network relationship against the other actors. It can be observed that a high level of network centrality has been facilitating knowledge transfer and also attracting new potential network relationships. Therefore, having a central position in the network relationship has been supporting Turkish manufacturing born globals' international expansion. Additionally, it is evident that Turkish manufacturing born globals have been seeking to have strong network relationships in order to maximize the benefits obtained from the network relationships in foreign markets. As has also been discussed by Granovetter (1973), Turkish manufacturing born globals have also been building strong relationships by ensuring trust within the network actors, having a reciprocal relationship and also being emotionally close with the network actors. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals have reached what they desired in their internationalization process.

6.2. To what extent do pre-internationalization networks affect the internationalization process of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?

According to Baker et al. (2003), firms have been trusting their pre-existing network relationships at the beginning of their internationalization processes. Also, Zucchella et al. (2007) have suggested that the firms' fast-paced internationalization processes could be explained by the pre-internationalization network relationships. Turkish manufacturing born globals have also used their pre-existing relationships in their internationalization processes. They have used their pre-internationalization social network relationships to build new relationships and start their

internationalization processes. Also, the pre-internationalization network relationships born globals have been a part of Turkish manufacturing born globals' internationalization vision creation process. However, the pre-internationalization network relationships have not always been effective in the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals. The pre-internationalization network relationships of Turkish manufacturing born globals have only been beneficial to the internationalization process if the founders have a prior background in the same sector. It is evident that the founders of the Turkish manufacturing born globals needed to build trustable and emotionally close network relationships before the foundation of their firms in order to benefit from them in their firms' internationalization processes. However, if Turkish manufacturing born globals had not built those kinds of relationships with their pre-internationalization network partners, they would not have gained any contributions from their pre-internationalization network relationships in their internationalization processes. It can be said that, in the Turkish commercial culture, firms or individuals would not help each other if they did not have close relationships with each other. They do not want to boost someone whom they do not know. Therefore, they have turned down any kind of future opportunities.

6.3. To what extent does internationalization affect the dynamics in the network of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry?

It can be observed that the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have affected the dynamics of their network relationships as much as their network relationships have affected their internationalization process. It has been impossible to conserve the exact nature of the network relationship with the development of the internationalization process. Hence, Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed some parts of the network dynamics purposely and mandatorily.

The possibility of being affected by external events has increased with the Turkish manufacturing born globals' expansion of their business to multiple countries. Also, since Turkish manufacturing born globals have started their internationalization in their neighbouring countries and are located in a turbulent area, Turkey's geographical position has predisposed the network relationship dynamics of Turkish manufacturing born globals to be affected by external events. These external events have formed as wars, changes in the documentation rules, diplomatic crises, boycotts and natural disasters and changed the dynamics of the network relationships. The networking partners have been inactive in the relationship when external events happen. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have lost these network relationships in foreign markets where external events happen. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have decided to add more actors in their network relationships with the development of their internationalization processes. When their internationalization processes expanded to multiple countries, they needed more relationships in order to gain more knowledge and carry out their international operations. They have had to get out of the complexity of managing their internationalization process and make the right strategic decisions. Therefore, they have decided to have more network relationships.

In addition, the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have forced them to be in a network relationship with actors that have different needs and resources but also complement the Turkish manufacturing born globals' businesses. Turkish manufacturing born globals have seen actors with the exact needs and resources as competitors in foreign markets. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have been trying to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage against these actors instead of being in a network relationship with them. Hence, it can be said that the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have made their network relationships disassortative.

Moreover, Turkish manufacturing born globals have decided to establish their presence in foreign markets in order to close the distance with their network relationships and also reach more relationships. As the internationalization process grows, Turkish manufacturing born globals have tended to be close to their network relationships or target foreign markets in order to facilitate their international operations and reduce the complexity of international expansion. Additionally, internationalization processes have made Turkish manufacturing born globals emotionally close to the other actors in the network relationship. However, this situation has made it challenging to manage the network relationships. Therefore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have prioritized the most beneficial network relationships for their internationalization processes when they have had a number of emotionally close network relationships and treated them with privilege.

Moreover, Turkish manufacturing born globals have needed new positions within their organizations with the growth of their internationalization processes. Also, internationalization processes have forced Turkish manufacturing born globals to change their employee profile in order to be more effective in their network relationships. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have improved their firms and changed their corporate culture, making themselves a preferred actor in network relationships as their internationalization expanded over time. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed their decision-makers with the development of their internationalization processes. The decisions have been made by top management when everything has been complex in the internationalization processes. Hence, it can be said that the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have changed the firm structure. Therefore, their network relationship dynamics have changed, and they have been able to be more effective within their network relationships.

6.4. To what extent do networks of Turkish born globals in the manufacturing industry affect the success of their internationalization?

It is obvious that Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been able to achieve success in their internationalization processes without the contribution of their network relationships, as has also been discussed by Coviello and Munro (1997). Turkish manufacturing born globals have achieved success in their internationalization processes through sustainable network relationships. Sustainability has been the key driver of the success even more than any monetary indicator. The one-time jobs have not been attractive to Turkish manufacturing born globals even though these

jobs have been highly profitable for them. The network relationships have allowed Turkish manufacturing born globals to reach end customers and build new beneficial network relationships in foreign markets. There has not been any other way to reach end-customers in the foreign markets for Turkish manufacturing born globals. Additionally, Turkish manufacturing born globals have adapted themselves to the changing dynamics of the foreign markets with the feedback of their network relationships and, therefore, achieved success in their internationalization relationships. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have built a successful internationalization process by having a strong brand name in foreign markets. Turkish manufacturing born globals have strengthened their brand names with their network relationships in the foreign markets. Therefore, it can be observed that Turkish manufacturing born globals have reached success in their internationalization processes through the opportunities, reputation and knowledge of foreign markets that their network relationships provide. Also, as has been stated earlier in the thesis, the network relationships are the most vital component of achieving a successful internationalization process for Turkish manufacturing born globals.

7. Conclusions

According to what has been mentioned in the discussion part of the thesis, it is evident that this thesis has yielded valuable insights into the effect of network relationships and the internationalization process of born globals on each other in the Turkish manufacturing industry. Through an extensive analysis of the internationalization path of born globals in the Turkish manufacturing industry, it has been demonstrated that the network relationship of Turkish manufacturing born globals have significantly contributed to the internationalization process of Turkish manufacturing born globals and brought success to them in the foreign markets.

Moreover, according to the conducted research, it has been demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals are trying to reach opportunities, knowledge and reputation through their network relationships. In order to maximize these benefits, the Turkish manufacturing born globals have relied on their social ties due to the influence of Turkish culture. Turkish manufacturing born globals have wanted to build relationships with individuals and trust them before building a business network relationship. As a consequence of this situation, Turkish manufacturing born globals have defined trust as the most crucial factor within a network relationship for their internationalization process. Therefore, they have always been trying to ensure trust with the other actors from the beginning of their network relationship. Also, Turkish manufacturing born globals have developed their network relationships emotionally and benefited more from these emotional relationships than the others in their internationalization processes. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals have built their strongest network relationships for their internationalization processes by improving their network relationships by making them more trustable, emotionally close, and reciprocal. Also, they have been adhering to their close network relationships and using them for all of their internationalization operations. However, if they do not have enough close and loyal network relationships in the foreign markets in which they operate, they hedge the risk with multiple network relationships in one foreign market.

Apart from the importance of deep emotions and trust within the network relationships to maximize the gained benefits, Turkish manufacturing born globals have not been in a network relationship with their founders' close circle in order to reach more diverse knowledge and conduct the business more professionally. Furthermore, Turkish manufacturing born globals have positioned themselves at the center of the network relationships to strengthen themselves in their internationalization processes. Also, they have built as many network relationships as possible to gain more knowledge about foreign markets since knowledge has been the most crucial intangible resource for their internationalization processes. Therefore, the thesis has demonstrated that trust and close network relationships have been the most beneficial ones for Turkish manufacturing born globals' internationalization processes, but there might also be some exceptions that make the network relationship more professional for international expansion. All of these trustable and emotionally close relationships have allowed Turkish manufacturing born globals to hold the markets.

Turkish manufacturing born globals have mostly built those network relationships by joining trade fairs and congresses. They have preferred to be in crowded events to show their products to everyone and, therefore, attract multiple new network relationships at one time. They have also visited potential network relationships in their target markets. Therefore, the thesis has demonstrated that Turkish manufacturing born globals built their network relationships by representing their products to potential network relationships through face-to-face interactions. However, when Turkish manufacturing born globals did not have any access to their target markets, they depended on agents to find local network relationships in that market. Additionally, the thesis has shown that network relationships have also found Turkish manufacturing born globals and brought Turkish manufacturing born globals to foreign markets because of their cheap products that are made of good quality.

The thesis has shown that it is impossible to maintain the same dynamics for Turkish manufacturing born globals throughout the internationalization process. Therefore, the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have made them change the dynamics within their network relationships. The conducted study has demonstrated that internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals have increased their network sizes, changed their decision makers within the network relationships, changed their employee profiles to fit in the network relationships better, made them create new positions within their organizations to manage their network relationship more effectively; improved their corporate culture to be the desired actors within the network relationships; developed close relationships with the other actors within their network relationships; made them close the physical distance with their network relationships; forced them to build disassortative network relationships; raised some external events that have resulted in changes in the conditions of the network relationships. It has been demonstrated that since Turkish manufacturing born globals started their internationalization without extensive experience, the internationalization processes have made them improve and, therefore, changed some dynamics within their network relationships.

Additionally, the thesis has proved that pre-internationalization network relationships have only been beneficial to the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals if the founders have a significant background in the related sector. However, close relationships with pre-internationalization network relationships have been required for Turkish manufacturing born globals to gain benefits from them.

Finally, the study has demonstrated that the network relationships have significantly affected the success of Turkish manufacturing born globals' internationalization processes. These network relationships have been acting as a bridge between Turkish manufacturing born globals and end-customers in foreign markets. Also, these network relationships provide feedback about the end customers and the foreign markets to the Turkish manufacturing born globals. Additionally, these network relationships have been branding Turkish manufacturing born globals' products in foreign markets. All of these touches from the network relationships have brought internationalization success to Turkish manufacturing born globals.

8. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The conducted research has provided significant theoretical insights into the importance and contributions of network relationships to the internationalization processes of Turkish manufacturing born globals and the influence of their internationalization process on the dynamics of network relationships. The outcomes of the thesis have partially resembled the existing literature but also added new understandings. However, this conducted study has also broadened the existing literature by revealing the factors that have been causing changes in the network relationship dynamics and components that changed within the network relationship dynamics. Additionally, the results of the thesis have shown the preferred characteristics of the network relationships from the Turkish manufacturing born globals in order to maximize the benefits in their internationalization processes and achieve success as distinct from what has been explained in the literature review section of the thesis. In addition to what has been mentioned above, the thesis has also contributed to the literature by revealing the most effective ways for Turkish manufacturing born globals to build network relationships for their international processes. Therefore, since the thesis has presented new insights specifically to the born globals in the manufacturing industry in developing countries, the conducted study has paved the way for new discussions. Through the findings of the thesis, the network approach of the manufacturing born globals in their internationalization process can be understood for the Turkish manufacturing born globals and the manufacturing born globals in the developing economies. Additionally, since the majority of born globals have been operating in the service industry, it has been hard to find research for born globals specifically operating in the manufacturing industry. Hence, the thesis has also provided an understanding of the internationalization of born globals, particularly in the manufacturing industry. Therefore, in light of the results of this thesis, further research can be conducted by using the thesis as a base.

The thesis has also been useful for the top management team of the newly established manufacturing firms that adopted the fast-paced internationalization vision. The results of the thesis

have shown that the top management team have had to enchain their network relationships to themselves by ensuring trust, improving the close relationships with the other actors, having a reciprocal relationship and having a central position within the network relationship in order to have a satisfactory internationalization process and reach the necessities for their internationalization processes. The managers will be able to decide on the most appropriate strategies for their internationalization processes by optimally using their network relationships since the thesis has shown the optimum network relationship characteristics that Turkish manufacturing born globals have relied on. Also, the managers can be aware of the changes in the network relationship dynamics that their internationalization processes cause. Additionally, the thesis has given insights into what managers should expect from their network relationships in order to achieve success in the internationalization process. Therefore, the findings of the thesis can facilitate the decision-making process of the decision-makers within the network relationships.

9. Suggestions for the Future Research

Limitations of the thesis need to be considered for the new studies. One of the limitations of the conducted research is the foundation year of the Turkish manufacturing-born globals. Since the Turkish economy has always fluctuated, the difficulty of reaching opportunities abroad has changed for Turkish manufacturing born globals depending on the era of the Turkish economy. Hence, it is suggested that future research will be better to focus on a specific era of the Turkish economy. The other limitation of the thesis is the sectors in which Turkish manufacturing-born globals operate. It can be observed that Turkish manufacturing born globals have different needs in each sector. Hence, the way of using network relationships in the internationalization processes might differ for Turkish manufacturing born globals depending on their sector. Therefore, future research should be concerned with the circular relationship between the network relationships and internationalization processes of born globals in a sectoral scope. Additionally, a deeper understanding can be revealed by increasing the sample size and adding new network characteristics to future research. Through the above-stated suggestions, future research can add new insight to the literature by taking this thesis as a baseline.

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Appendix

Interview Questions:

- 1- Can you introduce yourself and your company, please?
 - Why did you adopt a vision of expanding internationally that fast instead of a gradual approach?
- 2- How do you build your network relationships?
- 3- Why do you think having network relationships is needed for international growth?
- 4- How did you get benefits from your networks during your expansion to the foreign markets?
 - Why did you need the contributions of your networks to be international?
- 5- What kinds of connections have been more effective in your international operations?
 - Why were these connections more beneficial than the others?
 - How did you build those connections?
- 6- Can you tell us about your journey with one of your strong network relationships, which had an impact on your international expansion?
 - Why do you think that relationship was the strongest?
- 7- According to your experiences, do you think that having an important position in network relationships is more advantageous for the internationalization process? Why?
 - Can you share your experience about it?
- 8- Can you evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the amount of network relationships you have, the diversity of resources they offer, and the closeness you have established with these networks in your international expansion?
 - Can you give examples from your experiences?
- 9-How did your existing networks, which you already had before your first international operation, contribute to your internationalization process and the formation of your goals?
 - Why did you decide to collaborate with them in your way to internationalize?
 - Do you still gain leverage from them?

10- How did your internationalization process make changes in the structure of your network relationships?

- Why did your internationalization process change your network dynamics?

11- How do you measure your success in foreign markets for your international expansion? What does this success depend on?

- How were your network relationships effective in reaching success in your international expansion?

Consent Letter:

HASSELT UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Business Economics

Date:

Thesis Title: Network Relationships and the Internationalization Process of Born Globals the Case of Turkish Manufacturing Companies

This letter was written in order to ask your consent as an interviewee for the thesis study conducted by Hasselt University Faculty of Business Economics Master of Management student Gürel Akar. This study aims to reveal the impact of network relationships and the internationalization process of Turkish born globals on each other in the manufacturing industry. In this thesis, the collection, protection, and utilization of your data are done according to the GDPR. It consists of the following articles:

- 1- The interview will be recorded with your permission, and these recordings will be transcribed into text.
- 2- It will be voluntary for you to be involved in this interview, and you have a right to leave the interview whenever you want.
- 3- After the interview, the data gathered from the interview will only be used for the thesis.
- 4- Only, the researcher will be able to access the recordings of the interview, and these recordings will be deleted after the submission of the thesis.
- 5- You will always be able to reach and access the interview recordings.
- 6- Your name and personal information will not be included in the study. Also, your permission to use your firm's name and information will be asked at the beginning of the interview. If you do not give permission, your firm's name and information will also not be included in the study.

The interview will take a maximum of one hour of your time.

You will provide your permission for data to be gathered and utilized by signing this letter.

You can contact the researcher whenever you want at gurel.akar@student.uhasselt.be.

I consent to be interviewed for the thesis, which is carried out by Gürel Akar, and to have my data gathered, utilized, and saved in the way stated in this letter.

Date:

Name:

Signature: