



جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

**The College of Graduate Studies and the College of Business and Economics
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DBA Dissertation Defense

Entitled

*USING PERSONAL-TYPE RELATIONSHIPS (GUANXI) TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN CUSTOMERS IN
SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (SBE): AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN UAE, ABU DHABI*

by

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Abstract

Very few researchers have investigated the underlying socio-cultural formulas in the aspects of culture that affect relationships around the globe. Middle Eastern cultures give great importance to personal-type relationships (akin to the Chinese concept of Guanxi), in many different spheres of life. This research identifies the factors composing the unique forms of such relationships that are found in the context of Abu Dhabi city. The research focuses on the significant role and the effect of the cultivation in business contexts of personal-type relationships, characterised by the presence of personal trust, empathy, reciprocity, bonding, face, and affection. The aim of this research was to find the dimensions of such relationships and to test them as organizational relationships, as determinants of customer satisfaction and customer retention in the sector of small business enterprises (SBEs). Survey data which provided a sample to test the suggested model were collected from a database that included Abu Dhabi's SBEs. The findings of this research showed that personal relationships in this context could be extended to organizations. In addition, the results showed that the consequences of personal-type relationships (Guanxi) positively influence customer satisfaction and customer retention. Further, the contextualization of the constructs in this research helps to plug few current gaps in the literature on Guanxi theory.

Keywords: Guanxi, personal-type relationship, bonding, personal trust, reciprocity, empathy, face, affection, customer satisfaction, customer retention, SBE, Abu Dhabi.