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THESIS

**TERMINATION OF EXPORT OPERATIONS:
ANTECEDENTS, PROCESS AND OUTCOMES**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Master's Thesis

Termination of Export Operations: Antecedents, Process and Outcomes

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Despite being an important topic, the termination of export operations with importers has received little research attention. This research aims to investigate exporter-importer relationship dissolution in Turkey. Firstly, the author explores the reasons of exporter-importer relationship dissolution. Second, the stages of exporter-importer relationship dissolution process are investigated. Third, the consequences of exporter-importer relationship dissolution are analyzed.

This study adopted an exploratory approach to termination of export operations with importers. Data were collected through sixteen in-depth face-to-face interviews with exporter firms in Izmir, Turkey, corresponding to sixtyseven exporter-importer relationships that were terminated. The data were analyzed with the use of thematic analysis.

Findings revealed that there are six categories of the reasons of termination of export operations with importers: firm-related, customer-related, behavioral, external/environmental, external/competitive and bilateral. Environmental reasons are reported mostly by Turkish exporters, followed by competitive and cultural background differences. Besides, the process of relationship dissolution based on exporters' point of view is presented. In addition, the positive and negative consequences of the exporter-importer relationship dissolution are categorized. The most referred positive consequence is the possibility of the reactivation of the dissolved relationship while the mostly cited negative consequence is the sellers' obligation of compensating the

decreased financial performance.

This study contributes to the exporting literature by examining an underresearched topic of termination of export operations with importers, by making an in-depth analysis of the research phenomenon within a developing country context, and by bringing a holistic perspective through examining the reasons, the process, and the consequences of exporter relationship dissolution with importers.

Keywords: Exporter-Importer Relationships; Termination; Dissolution; Qualitative Study



ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

İhracat Faaliyetlerinin Sonlandırılması: Nedenler, Süreç ve Sonuçlar

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Önemli bir konu olmasına rağmen, ihracat operasyonlarının ithalatçı ile sonlandırılması araştırma bakımından az dikkat çekmiştir. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'de ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişkilerinin sonlanmasını incelemektedir. İlk olarak, yazar ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişkisinin sonlanma nedenlerini araştırmaktadır. İkinci olarak, ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişkisinin sonlanma sürecinin aşamaları araştırılmıştır. Üçüncü olarak, ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişkisinin sonlanmasının sonuçları analiz edilmiştir.

Bu çalışma ihracat faaliyetlerinin ithalatçılar ile sona ermesine keşifçi bir yaklaşım benimsemiştir. Veriler altmış yedi tane sonlanan ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişkilerine karşılık gelmektedir; İzmir, Türkiye'deki ihracatçılarla onaltı derinlemesine görüşme yoluyla toplanmıştır. Veriler tematik analiz kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Sonuçlar altı tane ihracat operasyonlarının ithalatçılarla sonlanmasının nedenlerinin kategorilerini ortaya çıkarmıştır: firma bağlantılı, müşteri bağlantılı, davranışsal, dış kaynaklı/çevresel dış kaynaklı/rekabetçi ve iki taraflı. Türk ihracatçılar en çok çevresel nedenleri rapor etmişlerdir, bunu rekabetçi ve kültürel birikim farklılıkları takip etmiştir. Aynı zamanda, ilişki sonlanmasının aşaması, ihracatçıların bakış açısından sunulmuştur. Ek olarak, ihracatçı-ithalatçı ilişki sonlanmasının olumlu ve olumsuz sonuçları kategorize edilmiştir. En çok bahsedilen olumlu sonuç, sonlanan ilişkinin yeniden aktifleşmesinin olası olması iken; en çok alıntı yapılmış olumsuz sonuç, satıcının düşmüş olan finansal performansını telafi etme zorunluluğudur.

Bu çalışma araştırma altında ihracat faaliyetlerinin ithalatçılarla

sonlandırılması konusunu inceleyerek, geliřmekte olan lkeler baēlamında, arařtırma olgusunu derinlemesine analizle ihracat literatrne katkı yapmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, ihracat iliřkisinin ithalatyla sonlanmasının nedenleri, sreci ve sonuları btncl bir yaklařım getirerek literatre katkı yapmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İhracat-İthalat İliřkileri; Sonlanma; Sona Erme; Nitel Arařtırma



TERMINATION OF EXPORT OPERATIONS: ANTECEDENTS, PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

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ABBREVIATIONS

B2B	Business-to-Business Market
PSF	Partnership Survival Framework
ROI	Return On Investment
SIVC	Supplier Initiated Value Change
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SP1	Service Provider 1
SP2	Service Provider 2
TSI	Transaction-Specific-Investment
UK	United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

Business relationships are formed with two or more partners paying attention to develop and maintain profitable relationships, may dissolve in the end. Firms make a lot of investments on the business relationships in the form of material and immaterial support.

According to Grönroos (2007: 35), counting the number of purchases of customer from the same firm is a way of describing when a relationship has formed. That is the existence of the repetitive purchases or an agreement for a specific time period display that a relationship with this customer has formed. Besides, other bonds also exist between customer and firm that provide an attachment of the customer to the firm, even customer does not perceive that the relationship exists. These bonds may be technological, geographical or knowledge-based, or other type. Therefore, a relationship is not only related to purchasing of customer, but also related to an attitude, as their hearts and minds should be committed to each other and the relationship. A relationship is a continuous process, it exists even there is no transaction of goods, services, knowledge and other information against money. Customers should perceive that the firm is always there to support them, not only the times that transaction occurs.

Exporter-importer relationships are a form of business relationship, that include several factors such as geographic and cultural distance, differences in language, differences in business perspectives of the individuals, barriers to export, and differences in currency. It is inevitable for exporter and importer firms to come across problems in international markets, as there are several dimensions in these complex business relationships. Even sometimes the domestic business relationships are challenging to manage and preserve, so maintaining international exporter-importer relationships require special attention (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 135). Exporting and importing are business activities that bring several advantages to firms and their countries. Exporting provides currency inflow and increase in economic welfare of the country. Economic growth is provided by effective exporting, so the reasons of export relationship dissolution should be analyzed. As Leonidou (2003: 129) conveyed: "From the economic standpoint, exporting contributes to national

economic development, generates foreign exchange reserves, creates backward and forward linkages in the economy, releases resources to support other economic activities, and enriches employment opportunities.” When looking at the business point of view, it provides capital for firm in order to reinvest and leads to growth, distributes risks to different markets, enables to use the useless operating capacity in a better way, appeals to shareholders and compensates them via more profit accumulation and develops technology, quality and levels of service in the firm (Leonidou, 2003: 129). Importing enable firms to obtain the resources that are not exist in their country and produce goods with them to serve their domestic markets or international markets. Also, it provides variety of alternative products to their citizens. As it is seen, these business activities must be maintained and developed to form more profitable business relationships.

A review of the literature reveals that reasons and process are the most studied aspects of relationship dissolution. Antecedents, reasons are studied by Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000); Gadeon et al. (2009); Halinen and Tähtinen (2002); Hocutt (1998); Kang et al. (2012); Tidström and Ahman (2006); Tsiros et al. (2009); Yang et al. (2012). Dissolution process is studied in two groups: first, as a process of relationship dissolution (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1272; Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 163; Tähtinen, 2002: 331), and a subgroup of it; the strategies used in the dissolution process such as communication strategies (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1273). Second, relationship dissolution as a stage of relationship formation and development (Dwyer et al., 1987: 15).

Pressey and Selassie (2007: 135) declares that in spite of the recognized emphasis on increasing export in developed and developing countries, there is little research on reasons of export fluctuation and relationship dissolution, while antecedents of export performance was studied extensively. Giller and Matear (2001: 94) point out that in the marketing channel relationships literature, how to establish and preserve effective relationships attracted researchers. However, the termination of interfirm relationships based on business to business perspective is investigated little unlike personal or consumer relationship ending. Managers should have knowledge about both launch of the relationships and dissolution of them in order to manage business relationships effectively (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 163). Also,

Morgan and Hunt (1994: 33) point out: “Just as medical science should understand both sickness and health, marketing science should understand both functional and dysfunctional relationships.” Issues related to dissolution are a major gap in the literature on relationship marketing and in order to understand relationships accurately, we need to capture why some relationships are unsuccessfully formed (Yang et al., 2012: 1106). In spite of its importance, the ending stage of buyer-seller relationship is studied less, compared to overall stages in the formation and development of relationship (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1271; Giller and Matear, 2001: 94; Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 164; Pressey and Qui, 2007: 107; Tidström and Ahman, 2006: 281). Another gap in the literature is that relationship dissolution consequences have not been studied well, except Kang et al. (2012), Pick (2010), Tähtinen (2002), Tahtinen and Havila (2004).

Besides, there is limited research in Turkey about buyer-seller relationship dissolution (Gülsoy, 2008). Moreover, the dominant researchers in this field are generally from developed countries such as Finland, England, and New Zealand. There is a limited research about the buyer-seller relationship dissolution in developing countries, as only in China and Russia this subject is studied (Pressey and Qui, 2007; Hallén & Johanson, 2004). As Pressey and Qui (2007: 107) asserted, analyzing business relationship dissolution based on Western cultures is not enough to understand the relationship dissolution in other cultures. In addition, relationship dissolution management has not been studied much, except some researchers (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000; Freeman and Browne, 2004; Pick, 2010; Purinton et al., 2007).

In order to understand which relationship should be ended and which one should be maintained, firms should understand the reasons of relationship dissolution and the stages of the dissolution process. Besides, they should know which communication strategies used by firms during the dissolution stages, how the communication should be in dissolution process and how dissolution outcomes affect both parties and the connected network (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1271). The prevention of dissolution is possible as managers know the reasons of dissolution process and with the help of this information, get the dissolution under control at an early stage of the process (Tidström and Ahman, 2006: 282). Furthermore, an

understanding of the dissolution process is useful for the formation of new relationship and helps firms to learn from their experiences (Tidström and Ahman, 2006: 282). Moreover, the dissolution of the relationship leads discharging the resources for future relationships of the firm (Pick, 2010: 98). As Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1272) states: "...The dissolution of some relationships can even be beneficial and desirable. Optimal resource allocation presumes the conclusion of relationships that do not provide sufficient return for the company."

As Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 554) said: "Research into business relationships has, to date, kept itself mainly "on the sunny side of the street", examining the formation and development of relationships. We argue that it is time to acknowledge that not everything in relationships is agreeable, and that sometimes dissolving a relationship may be the best thing to do." So, both development and ending of the relationship needed to be recognized by managers in order to maintain a successful relationship (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997, 554). Tidström and Ahman (2006: 282) pointed out that firms tend to label the relationship ending as negative result because of the huge investment of resources required to form a relationship. However, ending a relationship is a valuable tool for firms since they learn from their experiences to preserve and maintain successful relationships (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 586; Tidström and Ahman, 2006: 282). Ritter and Geersbro (2011: 988) also mentioned that all customers in firms' portfolio are not profitable and many firms have relationships with the customers' that waste firm's resources and firms refrain from ending them.

The objective of this research is to make an in-depth analysis of termination of export operations with importers. The specific research questions of this study are; "What are the reasons of termination of export operations with importers?", "What is the process of termination of export operations with importers?" and "What are the consequences of termination of export operations with importers?". Being informed about the need for ending unprofitable business relationships, firms will be encouraged to follow dissolution management strategies and apply dissolution communication strategies according to their relationship category. This will enable firms to make use of their limited and valuable resources to build more profitable business relationships in the future.

This thesis is organized as follows. In the first chapter, basic definitions of termination of export operations with importers are analyzed. In the second chapter, buyer-seller relationship dissolution categorizations are discussed. In the third chapter, reasons for buyer-seller relationship dissolution are investigated. In the fourth chapter, buyer-seller dissolution process models are presented. In the fifth chapter, buyer-seller relationship dissolution management is mentioned. In the sixth section, consequences of buyer-seller relationship dissolution are analyzed. In the seventh section, the methodology of the research is presented. In the eighth chapter, findings and discussion are displayed.



CHAPTER 1

TERMINATION OF EXPORT OPERATIONS WITH IMPORTERS: BASIC DEFINITIONS

1.1. BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

1.1.1. Definition of Buyer-Seller Relationship

Hakansson and Snehota (1995: 42) declare that: “A relationship develops between two companies as some activity links, resource ties or actor bonds are formed between two companies.” Activities of firms include inventing products, producing them, developing and transforming information, purchasing and selling activities and these activities determine the costs and revenues of firm. Activity links are created when parties form business relationships and these links have an effect on the business network they are in. The change in one party’s activity leads to an adaptation in other party’s activity links or formation of new activity links as the authors referred. Resources include technical, personal, financial and other resources, which firms are required to obtain for the continuation of their business activities. As firms cannot have all the resources they need, they have to form business relationships to make use of others’ resources and share their resources with other firms. That means, resource ties exist between business relationship partners with regard to actor bonds. Firms are managed by individuals and business relationships are formed by individuals. As the words of Hakansson and Snehota designated (1995: 192): “Companies and individuals as actors in business networks are bounded in their perceptions, knowledge and capabilities and therefore different from each other. Their behaviours change as their perceptions, knowledge, capabilities and intent change.”

According to Tähtinen et al. (2007: 237), in a relationship mutual dependence exists slightly, even parties have power unbalance and they are supposed to attain a win-win situation. Social relationships are important in the successful relationship formation; especially trust, commitment and reciprocity (Grønhaug et al., 1999: 177). Grønhaug et al., (1999: 177) also point out the dynamic nature of the business relationships since they are first founded, then developed and altered within a time.

Also, relationship partners show conformation within a relationship and learn from each other. With the help of communications and positive experiences; trust, commitment may be created and thus, they decrease the required time and effort to conduct business. Moreover, there is an assumption that personal relationships formed by social interactions are crucial for business. Individuals are managing the relationships and conducting business, their performance have an effect on their organizations. As Grønhaug et al. (1999: 178) convey: “The ‘building block’ of most (all?) organizations is the individual. In organizations, individuals hold positions which vary in task requirements, obligations and authority.” Besides, organizations and individuals belong to a specific cultural background which their characteristics may affect individuals’ perceptions and decisions.

1.1.1.1. Relationship Development Stages

Dwyer et al., (1987: 15) pointed out that the business relationship is formed after passing form certain stages which are; awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment and dissolution. First stage is awareness, where one party notices the other and thinking that this partner may be appropriate to form a relationship. It is a unilateral effort, when it becomes bilateral the next stage starts. The second stage exploration includes searching efforts and trials of business relationship as the authors disclosed. Trial is given example by the authors as buyer making a trial purchases from seller. It is done through evaluating the benefits and costs of the probable relationship. The authors mentioned that in this stage, the relationship is very delicate to possible dissolutions, since the interdependence of parties does not exist yet and there is a minimum or no investment in a relationship. Dwyer et al. (1987: 16) also acknowledged that this stage includes five sub-processes which are: attraction, communication and bargaining, development and exercise of power, norm development, and expectation development.

The third stage expansion is realized when there is persistent increase in the benefits of relationship partners and their interdependency is increasing. The characteristics of successful and long-term relationships such as mutual dependence, mutual trust and satisfaction of partners exist in the relationship and continue to

increase. Also, partners are now taking more risks in this stage according to the authors. Fourth stage is commitment, where partners are in verbal agreement of continuing the relationship as Dwyer et al. (1987: 19) cited. This is the highest level that can be reached in any business relationships as partners' satisfaction of the relationship prevent them to evaluate alternative more attractive partners. The last phase is dissolution, where partners exit the relationship. According to the authors, it is inevitable that some relationships are dissolved since the relationship development framework showed the probability of dissolution through each stage. As Dwyer et al. (1987: 19) suggested, the negative outcomes of dissolution is bigger after passing through expansion and commitment stages in the relationship development process.

Jap (2001) introduced the relationship lifecycle. Jap (2001: 98) defined relationship lifecycle as: the dynamic development process of exchange relationships. The first phase is exploration, where the investigation and trial takes place and members in a channel evaluate the probable responsibilities, prosperities and burdens of exchange with a specific supplier. Trust is in minimum level in this phase, but with accurate communications, and concerning of the other party the trust can be developed and uncertainty of customer with regard to supplier's intentions can be decreased.

The second phase is buildup, where parties develop mutual understanding of their intentions, motivations and orientations via sharing information actively and involving in different activities. Mutual knowledge is formed between firms and they seek for developing a mutually beneficial relationship in this stage as distinct from exploration phase. Third phase is maturity, where firms form an implicit or explicit agreement for collaboration continuation based on a routine and receiving so satisfying return from the relationship that prevents firm to seek for alternative partners. In the last phase decline, dissatisfaction of both parties or one party is seen and one or both parties considering relationship dissolution, seeking for alternative partners and starting to communicate this intent of ending the relationship.

1.1.2. Definition of Exporter-Importer Relationship and Its Importance

Relationships are formed across country boundaries and important partners in the business channel may be outside of the country in international marketing context (Samiee and Walters, 2003: 194). Business relationships in international context include complex topics since competition is high as several firms enter international market and they have to compete for their supply chain settlement. Besides, as physical distance is higher between buyers and suppliers in international markets, the management of distribution channels is challenging. As Levy (1997) stated, cultural distance between parties is another factor that needs to be managed in international business context (as cited in Samiee and Walters, 2006: 590). Samiee and Walters (2003: 206) also noted that cultural diversity is one of the challenges in international relationship; it is inevitable in international context. Also, cultural diversity has a great impact on buyer-seller relationship advancement and continuity implementations. Pressey and Selassie (2007: 133) also specified that international relationships may also be delicate like domestic relationships. Moreover, countries are different in terms of economic, competitive and political dimensions, so management styles also differ (Samiee and Walters, 2003: 206). All at once, management of channels must be applied in global context, as markets are more international (Samiee and Walters, 2006: 589). The authors also claimed that managers know that geographical and cultural distances affect their management styles and affect their supply chain practices.

As markets are globalized and cooperative strategies are given importance, firms change their distribution strategies and find ways to strengthen relationships with their suppliers and develop mutual interdependence (Samiee and Walters, 2003: 194). According to the authors, it is crucial to build trust and commitment in international relationships in order to deal with cultural distance. However, these practices require huge investment with respect to time, action and costs. Moreover, geographical distance requires firms to increase their information sharing by personal visits. In order to address international supply chain management, firms seek for best price, quality and service supplier in a market.

The benefits of the exporter-importer relationship sustainment are mentioned by Leonidou (2003: 135). Exporters enjoy the preserved high constant sales coming from their foreign customers and take advantage of business opportunities in foreign markets; are able to bring probable customer switching to other foreign suppliers to a minimum level and are able to make use of foreign customers' as a source to come up with new business ideas and deep market knowledge. Conversely, importers are able to exploit exporters' knowhow and resources in order to decrease the costs and attain better purchasing prices; are able to offer exporters to change their production methods in order to accelerate the process, decrease wastage, and provide efficiency; and able to make use of technical advancements and cost rationalization of the exporters' firm. Regardless of the fact that, seek for advantages of business relationship transactions, both exporters and importers should have an objective of collaborative communications rather than entirely transactional relations. Leonidou et al. (2014: 36) asserted that specific behavioral factors have an important impact on both strengthening and damaging exporter-importer relationship quality and positive impact on performance outcomes. Moreover, when these relationship quality factors are high, relational and financial performance are developed.

1.1.3. Definition of Buyer-Seller Relationship Dissolution

Within the relationship dissolution literature, there is variety of words used. Withdrawal (Giller and Matear, 2001; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997), dissolution (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000; Beloucif et al., 2006; Hocutt, 1998; Pressey and Mathews, 2003; Seabright et al., 1992; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997), ending (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002; Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009; Michalski, 2004; Tähtinen, 2002; Tidström and Ahman, 2006), switching (Seabright et al., 1992), break up (Baxter, 1985), exit (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000; Hirschman, 1970; Ping 1999; Purinton et al., 2007), termination (Alajoutsijärvi, 2000; Dwyer, 1992; Giller and Matear, 2001; Ritter and Geersbro, 2011; Tsiros et al. 2009), divorce (Perrien et al., 1995; Vaaland et al., 2004), fading (Grønhaug et al., 1999) are the most mentioned terms. The majority of the researchers also did not use one specific word, they used more than one words interchangeably such as Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila,

(1997); Alajoutsijärvi et al., (2000); Pressey and Selassie, (2007). For example; Pressey and Selassie (2007: 133) convey that in their paper the terms “dissolution” and “termination” are mentioned interchangeably.

Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 560) suggest that there is no accurate definition of relationship dissolution in the literature, this means very limited interest has given to this topic and it is a gap in relationship studies; in precise terms, there is a lack of interest to offer definition of the business relationship phenomenon. So in this research, the most mentioned term “dissolution” will be used mostly; “ending” and “exit” are also used.

Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 560) define relationship dissolution as in circumstances that entire ties of action are damaged and resource bonds are nonexistent between the firms. Stewart (1998: 235) also defines the customer exit in marketing as: “The term customer exit is used to denote the economic phenomenon of a customer ceasing patronage of a particular supplier.” Another definition is provided by Ellis (2006: 1169) as the elimination of intermediaries from distribution network is a situation of relationship termination. Kang et al. (2012: 252) define relationship dissolution as a situation, which the relationship ends and no transaction exists anymore. Tsiros et al. (2009: 263) also define it as an ending of a business relationship between two firms. Pick (2010: 95) follows Halinen and Tähtinen’s (2002) opinion and define it with the following words: “...a process of the planned and conscious ending of a relationship with a business partner by evaluating the existing relationship, decreasing current ties such as purchase frequency or contact levels and/or explicitly stating the end of the relationship (i.e., in contractual settings).” What is common among these definitions; any interaction, transaction, ties or bonds of resources become nonexistent between business partners when the dissolution of the relationship is realized.

Some research points out that dissolution is not only a reversal of the relationship development (Dwyer et al., 1987: 20). Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 166) refer that relationship ending is a dimension of a larger relationship network. It is compatible with the research of Dwyer et al. (1987), as the dissolution is presented as a fifth stage of relationship development process of buyer-seller relationships. Dwyer et al. (1987: 20) points out the importance of the existence of a stage for defining

dissolution: “There are probably several trajectories for dissolution and we risk oversimplification by devoting four stages to relationship development while consolidating termination into a single phase.”

Prior research showed that, in some relationships the energy did not disappear and transferred to another relationship to be formed in the future (Havila and Wilkinson, 2002; Pressey and Qui, 2007). The notion behind transfer of relationship energy is the both parties’ personnels’ social bonds which built with time as the authors declared (Havila and Wilkinson, 2002: 192). The relationship energy is transferred to future relationships as it does not disappear completely even the relationship is dissolved. Also, some ended relationships may be reactivated in the future.

Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 557) conveyed that the durability of the relationship depends on collective assumption of two firms while only one firm’s desire to end the relationship is enough, regardless of other firms’ preference of continuity. It is compatible with Dwyer et al.’s. (1987: 20) research stating that while relationship development requires a bilateral effort, dissolution in contrast is more conveniently started unilaterally.

1.1.4. Other Definitions Related to Buyer-Seller Relationship Dissolution

1.1.4.1. Dissolution Intention and Termination/Exit Propensity

Definition

There is some research investigating the reasons/antecedents and consequences of a term “dissolution intention” (Kang et al., 2012; Ping, 1994; Ping, 1995; Yang et al., 2012). Dissolution intention is defined as holding an intent or desire to withdraw from the relationship within the relationship stage (Kang et al., 2012: 254). Termination propensity is one of the terms that is used to describe the prior stage of dissolution. Bluedorn (1982) point out that propensity to leave is the assumed probability that a partner will end the relationship in the (reasonably) near future (as cited in Morgan and Hunt, 1994: 26). Ellis (2006: 1175) reveals that termination propensity is not an actual termination, since actual termination is seen when opportunity costs of not changing a relationship exceeds the costs of switching

to other exchange modes. Ping (1999: 219) also mentions exit propensity as the unwillingness to continue the current relationship.

1.1.4.2. Definition of Exit

The term “exit” was used by several researchers (Giller and Matear, 2001; Hirschman, 1970; Hirschman, 1974; Ping, 1993; Ping, 1994; Ping, 1995; Ping, 1997; Ping, 1999; Rusbult et al., 1982). Hirschman (1970) presented “exit, voice and loyalty” (EVL) framework in social psychology. Hirschman (1970: 4) discussed exit in terms of customers stop buying of firm’s products or in terms of organizations’ members leaving the organization. Hirschman (1970: 4) defined it as an exit option which causes decreased revenues and decreased membership. Besides, management ends up with seeking the fault and new customers/members. The second option is voice, in which customers/members indicate their dissatisfaction directly to the management or to the higher authority holding position or anyone who may listen their complaints. As a result, management again tries to find the causes of dissatisfaction and tries to address the problems. If exit is not effective to change firm’s faulted behaviours, then voice is probably will play an important role in organizations.

However, there may be some conditions that voice and exit are not effective options, so loyalty comes to the stage. As Hirschman (1970: 77) states clearly, the existence of loyalty makes exit less probable. Besides, it is worthy to mention Hirschman’s words that loyalty holds exit at bay and actuates voice. Hirschman (1970) found six factors that result in exit of voice: decline in quality; attractiveness and availability of alternatives; likelihood of success in the case of voice, switching costs; perceived value of the product/services and customer loyalty.

1.2. EXPORT WITHDRAWAL

Despite internationalization of firms is studied so much, there is limited research about export withdrawal. One reason for this, export withdrawal was seen generally as a failure; but Crick (2002: 66) conveyed that decisions like that may help to gain a strategic advantage, for example, focusing on domestic market may be

advantageous since the advantage may vary from firm to firm. Also, withdrawing from one specific market may bring an advantage of transferring all the resources, time, personnel to the markets that will be served effectively. According to Pauwels and Matthyssens (1999: 10), export withdrawal was described as firm's strategic decision for eliminating a product/market combination from its global portfolio.

There are very few studies conducted in the literature aiming to illustrate the export withdrawal process. Pauwels and Matthyssens (1999: 12) found six phases in the export withdrawal decision making process by using three multidisciplinary theoretical constructs; market commitment, strategic fit and strategic flexibility: initial and accumulating market commitment, increasing stress, two opposite reactions, toward a stress threshold, confrontation at the threshold, and learning beyond the withdrawal. Also, by further investigating these phases; three fundamental instruments which control this decision making process were introduced: an inhibition motor of escalating market commitment, an acceleration motor of increasing strategic flexibility, and an arbitration motor that leads to the convergence of the first two.

Some studies (Crick, 2002; Crick, 2003; Crick, 2004; Crick and Chaudhry, 2006; Pauwels and Matthyssens, 1999; Reiljan, 2007) have investigated the reasons of export withdrawal which may be internal or external. Reiljan (2007: 245) categorized reasons for export withdrawal into three groups which are: lack of international experience, changes in strategy, and poor performance or increase in production costs. Some researchers have explored which constructs could be related to export withdrawal. Pauwels and Matthyssens (1999: 32) found three basic constructs that related to strategy process theory of export withdrawal; market commitment, strategic fit and strategic flexibility. Reiljan (2007: 257) also found that cooperation and innovation affects managers/owners' decision of withdrawal directly or indirectly from the international business. Export withdrawals are seen widely in firms which have not launched new products, services or processes; which means non-innovative firms. However, the role of cooperation in diminishing export withdrawals does not show an assured result. Also, the study of Reiljan (2007: 258) provides the importance rank of different reasons with regard to withdrawal of export. Causes connected to strategy changes are found to be three most important

reasons. Strategy changes include the termination of a cooperation contract with the current partner, increase in competition in the target market and the foreign owner's strategy. The least important reason is found to obtain deficient knowledge of export markets and internationalization processes.

According to Crick (2002: 66), there are differences between the perceptions of two groups of non-exporter firms with anterior export experience: firms that have exported before but are not currently doing export and do not have an intention to export in the future; named "disinterested firms", and firms that have exported before but are not currently doing export, but have an intention to do in the future; named "disappointed firms". The research found out the term "non-exporters" is a non homogenous group of firms and need to be reorganized in order to apply the export policy assistance properly (Crick, 2002: 72). There is no need of export policy assistance from government for disinterested firms since they have no intention to start exporting. Crick (2004: 574) says that disinterested firms must be export ready before applying for export assistance.

The main reasons of discontinuing export for disinterested firms are basic procedural problems. However, cost-related problems are the reasons of discontinuing export for disappointed firms. Comparing the assistance needs of two groups, disinterested firms referred basic perceptual and procedural problems while disappointed ones were eager to get assistance regarding other entry modes apart from exporting. Crick (2004: 569) conducted in-depth interviews with these firms and reported that there is a difference between disinterested and disappointed firms based on being "export ready" and this difference affects the decision of export withdrawal. The interviews also reveal that critical incidents which lead firms to cease exporting are very common among some firms, apart from the market factors and agent's approaches. Moreover, both internal and external factors affected some firms rather than a critical incident both in domestic and international markets. Moreover, perceptions of managers of the two groups of firms on reasons of export withdrawal also differ. For example, for disinterested firms, the highest ranked reasons are: managers' perceptions towards time and risk implications, lack of training, plus an absence of knowledge towards basic procedural factors such as obtaining representation. For disappointed firms, problems related to factors enabling

them to offer a competitive price overseas and not having a government assistance to help them to enter the market with alternative modes of market entry.

Based on in-depth interviews, Crick (2003: 409) categorized firms based on business activity decisions after the eighteen months from withdrawal decision. The first category is the domestic players; seven out of nine disinterested firms (three of them faded away from business in the six months), and four managers of disappointed firms chose to continue in the domestic market with an entrepreneurial decision due to sufficient demand to retain the firms in business. The second category is the reluctant marginal players in overseas markets; two of the disinterested firms and five disappointed firms were answering to casual orders which generally from prior agency agreements that had been agreed. Since these firms are incapable of entering into overseas competition, their attention is given to domestic market. Firms in this category, both disinterested and disappointed firms seek to enter overseas markets when it is possible, when compared to the first category. Disinterested firms changed their minds because of infinite demand in domestic market.

The third one is the subsidiary based firms; three disappointed firms had launched subsidiaries overseas. Based on the UK firm manager/owner's idea of his/her firm is not capable of continuing competition by pursuing export strategy any more. So, they decided to capture subsidiaries in low cost developing countries, so that they could make use of their firms' international value chains. Crick and Chaudhry (2006: 284) added two categories to prior findings: the overseas collaborators and the bought out firm. The "bought out" firm were sold and until then had managed by the parent company in Europe, after eighteen-month of time period. There was a general opinion shared by some managers that, to follow an export strategy was not enough to be competitive in international markets, there was a need for adopting alternative market entry strategies such as sourcing from low-cost developing countries such as India and Pakistan. Other remaining managers followed this idea and had launched subsidiaries in low-cost developing countries, from now on, these firms serving to both domestic and international markets.

CHAPTER 2

CATEGORIZATION OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

2.1. CATEGORIZATION ACCORDING TO TYPES OF BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR ENDINGS

Michalski (2004: 977) conveys that it is important for marketing managers to know about types of customer relationships ending so that they may apply different strategies and actions to take back vanished customers. The association between the nature of a business relationship and its ending based on prior research about the reasons and the process of business relationship ending is investigated in the research of Tähtinen et al. (2007). Their research is the first to analyze the dimensions of business relationships which affect their ending process (Tähtinen et al., 2007: 231). The information on causes and process of relationship ending may be extended by analyzing the dimensions of the relationship, which managers make use of this information to manage the ending smartly. The literature includes several research on providing a categorization of ending relationships (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002; Pick, 2010; Pressey and Mathews, 2003; Pressey and Selassie, 2007; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997; Tähtinen et al., 2007).

The research of Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997), and Halinen and Tähtinen (2002) discussed categorization of business relationships and categorization of their endings according to relationship categories (see Table 1). Both studies distinguished three types of relationships by utilizing Caplow's (1968) ideas; terminal, continuous and episodic. Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997) discussed the triadic aspect of the relationship. Also, both of them identified different types of dissolution. Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 564) named those endings as predetermined, forced, natural, decided and desired. Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 167) named them as predetermined, chosen, forced, natural, desired and chosen. Tähtinen et al. (2007: 236) provide a classification based on relationship continuity (see Table 1). According to them, chosen, forced, or natural end is possible for continuous relationships. In terminal relationships, desired end is seen. In episodic relationships, predetermined end exists (Tähtinen et al., 2007: 241).

Table 1. Categorization According to Types of Business Relationships and Their Endings

The Research	Type of Relationship	Type of Their Ending
Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997)	Terminal	Desired
	Continuous	Decided, forced, natural
	Episodic	Predetermined, decided, forced
Tähtinen and Halinen (2002)	Terminal	Desired
	Continuous	Chosen, forced, natural
	Episodic	Predetermined, chosen, forced
Tähtinen et al., (2007)	Terminal	Desired
	Continuous	Chosen, forced, natural
	Episodic	Predetermined, chosen, forced

Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 168) convey that in terminal relationships, both actors are not eager to continue the relationship forever, since they want to be independent or with another actor. The circumstances require these actors to be together, but the termination is what they seek for as soon as possible, termed as “desired ending” (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 563).

In continuous relationships, actors form a relationship assuming forever, they do not have an intention to end it, but dissolution realizes unexpectedly (Halinen and Tähtinen 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 564). If the reason is one actor’s dissatisfaction with the relationship and one actor wants to end it or mutual decision to end the relationship is taken, the type is “decided/chosen ending” (Halinen and Tähtinen 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 564). Halinen and Tähtinen (2002) called it “chosen”, whereas Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997) called it “decided”. Sometimes, a change in the network or a critical incident influence the relationship and lead to dissolution, it is called “forced ending” in this situation (Halinen and Tähtinen 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 564). When the relationship step by step becomes useless, that means a “natural ending” is close since there is a minimum need for the benefits of business relationship (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 564)

Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 168) explain the formation of episodic relationship for a specific limited time period for a purpose and it dissolves after the completion of the purpose. Its’ ending category is “predetermined”, if it ends before

specific period of time, then it is “forced” or “decided/chosen” (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 168; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 565).

2.2. CATEGORIZATION OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION ACCORDING TO INTENSITY

The relationship dissolution is also categorized according to its intensity (see Table 2). Pressey and Selassie (2007: 138) convey that “the intensity” of dissolution is observed from interviews implicitly or explicitly. The outcome of intensity of exit is complete, partial or temporary dissolution (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 138). Pick (2010: 95) also categorized the relationship dissolution as partial or complete.

Complete dissolution exists when the initiator party of dissolution is very determined to never reactivate the relationship in the future (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 138). According to Pick (2010: 95), complete or total dissolution means that cutting off all relationships with one partner. Partial dissolution is described by Pressey and Selassie (2007: 138), in the conditions where the other party decreased the volume of buying and the relationship deteriorated. A partial dissolution is seen in relationships that have more than one relationship with other business partner, and ending one relationship only as Pick (2010: 95) stated. As Pressey and Mathews (2003: 138) stated, relationship is not completely terminated, only purchasing frequency has decreased due to competitor actions. The final type temporary dissolution is realized when one party is unable to buy products with high volume anymore because of negative circumstances such as economic crisis, but thinking of an improvement of the relationship in the future since link of the relationship still remains (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 139).

Table 2. Categorization of Relationship Dissolution According to Intensity

The Research	Type of Dissolution
Pressey and Selassie (2007)	Complete, partial, temporary
Pick (2010)	Complete, partial

2.3. CATEGORIZATION OF BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS ACCORDING TO RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

According to Tähtinen et al.'s, (2007: 235) research, there are some areas to pay attention when deciding to end the relationship. First one is the intensity of ending process; which means reducing the business exchange step by step or abruptly. Second one is the speed of the decision of process, announcing the ending after a notice given to supplier or immediately. Last one is about the decision's certainty, if there is a possibility of reactivating the relationship in the future or not.

The preferred way and appropriate way of ending business relationship means differently. Preferred way means rational approach which is also economical according to Tähtinen et al. (2007: 236). The appropriate way means considering the other party's interests. So, a gap exists between the appropriate and preferred ending.

Based on the existing literature, authors identified features such as: the dependency intensity on the other actor; the power balance between the actors; the relationship structure, the relationship formality, and the relationship continuity. If the interdependency in a relationship is high, the business relationship ending is complicated and slow. If the interdependency in a relationship is low, simple and quick end will be seen. Moreover, a classification based on the relationship power balance is presented in their study. According to the authors, when the power in a relationship is balanced or equal, beautiful ending is realized. When the power is unbalanced or unequal between the parties, unsatisfactory exit will occur. Similarly, if the relationship is formal, ending will be performed by-the-book end. A classification based on relationship formality refers that, informal relationships end flexibly but stressful. Moreover, a classification is provided based on relationship structure including number of actors from supplier and buyer. If there are multiple suppliers and buyers in a relationship, the ending will be complicated and slow. However, simple and fast end occurs when either supplier or buyer includes one actor independent of existing multiple actors from other party. Besides, a classification based on relationship continuity is provided by the authors as it is discussed above. In continuous relationships; chosen, forced, or natural end is

possible. In terminal relationships, desired end is seen. In episodic relationships, predetermined end exists.

The paper of Tähtinen et al. (2007: 244) also presents the most influential characteristics of the ending process; which are the complexity of the process; the time it takes; the flexibility of the process; and, the quality of it. The nature of the relationship impacts its probable dissolution process as it is seen from five categorizations of relationships. However, relationships and endings are not rigid, they are dynamic and their nature changes over time. Changes in the environment, changes in partners' strategy and tactics, and changes in manager of the relationship may be the reason of changes in the nature of the relationship. Only continuous relationships may be influenced by these five characteristics of the relationship, since terminal and episodic relationships are purposive and their endings are predetermined. So, the paper of Tähtinen et al. (2007: 243) proposes different continuous relationships and their endings, for example; highly interdependent, having multiple actors from both sides and formal relationship's ending process is complicated, slow process and follows jointly agreed rules. Seven different combinations possible are presented in their research.

2.4. RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION CATEGORIZATION ACCORDING TO INITIATOR PARTY

Researchers also provided initiator party related categorization of the buyer-seller relationship dissolution (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009; Pressey and Mathews, 2003) (see Table 3). Pressey and Mathews (2003: 136) added further to the contributions of Hocutt (1998), and Perrien, et al. (1995), by proposing four categories of dissolution; joint decisions to end relations, dissolution of the relationship by either buyer or supplier and the fading away of relations.

Bilateral decision to end relationship may be realized in the condition that neither party wants to end the relationship voluntarily but the external reasons force them to do so (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 136). Holmlund and Hobbs (2009) also identified this category in their research as mutually agreed ending. It occurred when

the agreement was over and both parties did not want to renew it (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009: 275).

Second type offered by Pressey and Mathews (2003); supplier-de-selection, which is the most common type that is realized by buyer or customer. Also, it is among them according to Pressey and Mathews (2003: 142). Holmlund and Hobbs (2009: 274) identified this ending category as buyer-initiated ending. Pressey and Mathews (2003: 137) state that apart from buyers, suppliers may also decide to end unprofitable relationships.

Customer-de-selection is the third type that requires attention because it is not studied extensively in the literature (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 138). Seller-initiated ending was proposed by Holmlund and Hobbs (2009: 274) to describe the same category. The last one, fading away of the relationship is realized when the relationship is not important and profitable so much for both parties, since the relationship perishes and no one tries to restore it (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 138). This type is not mentioned in the literature before, which the decision to break up is made by both of them or one party.

Table 3. Relationship Dissolution Categorization According to Initiator Party

The Research	Type of Dissolution
Pressey and Mathews (2003)	Bilateral ending, customer-de-selection, supplier-de-selection, fading away of the relationship
Holmlund and Hobbs (2009)	Buyer-initiated, seller-initiated, mutually agreed ending

CHAPTER 3

REASONS OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

3.1. THE CATEGORIZATION OF INFLUENCING FACTORS AND EVENTS

3.1.1. Attenuating Factors and Events, Predisposing Factors and Precipitating Events

The study of Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 565) distinguishes two groups of factors of triadic dissolution based on Duck (1981): predisposing factors and precipitating events. The study of Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 169) provided a categorization of factors that contributes or prevents relationship dissolution based on Duck (1981), and Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997). Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 169) contributed to the literature by adding attenuating factors and events into categorizations of motivators of dissolution. The study of Tähtinen and Vaaland (2006: 19) presented attenuating analysis and categorized attenuating factors in business relationships which already existed in the literature.

Predisposing factors endure within the relationship before actors form a relationship, making it open to destruction (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002; Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997). As Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 565) reveal, they are not accurately perceived, episodic and terminal relationships tend to include predisposing factors.

Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997) defines that precipitating events emerge from companies, from dyadic relationships or from triadic business network, that lead change to the relationship and speed up the process of dissolution. Precipitating events require a relationship to be adjusted to new circumstances and if it is not adjusted, create intention to end the relationship for the actors (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 568). Predisposing factors can be actor-related, dyad-related, triad-related, precipitating events can be actor-related, dyad-related, triad-related and network-related according to Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997: 581).

As Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 171) propose, attenuating factors and events are moderators of the effects of predisposing factors and precipitated events. These

factors and events may exist related to actors, to their relationship or to the surrounding business network. Attenuating factors control the actors' decisions to restore or dissolve relationship in the process.

Tähtinen and Vaaland (2006: 20) introduce the items in attenuating analysis; which are lost relational investments, dissolution process costs, possible sanctions for future business, network limitations and set up costs. In the beginning of the attenuating analysis, managerial awareness and understanding of attenuating factors in order to restore problematic relationship should exist. The internal content, the importance and the results of attenuating factors analysis are done through this analysis. The second step is to measure value of a troubled relationship to the firm, and then costs of relationship dissolution and benefits of it should be analyzed. If it worths saving, then managers apply restoring actions. The cooperation and communication between firms are developed if both parties prefer it. However, if it does not worth saving, that means value of the relationship is less than alternative partners and managers accelerate the dissolution process.

The first attenuating factor is relational investments, which means being aware of the lost relational investments while thinking of dissolution Tähtinen and Vaaland (2006: 20). Time, expenses and effort to develop and maintain a relationship are wasted when relationship dissolves since the development of relationship requires investment. Also, potential future relational benefits from the relationship will also be lost. Second attenuating factor is the dissolution process costs, since dissolution has enormous financial burdens and procedures if there is a dispute between parties. The third one is possible sanctions for future business, which represents a fear of being sued and being punished by the law. An awareness of probable punishments, including financial loss, loss of market reputation and governmental goodwill, is powerful attenuating factor. Also, social pressures of unsatisfied customers' word-of-mouth in business network are an attenuating factor. The network limitations category assumes that available alternative partners in the network are very few. Managers' decision to dissolve a business relationship may be stalled when available alternative partners are not attractive as the authors mentioned. Last category is set-up costs, which is related to developing a new relationship in place for dissolved relationship. During the adaptation of the parties to each other,

there is an uncertainty in probable costs, time and business procedures. Essentially, project-based businesses are hard to adapt and it is risky, since the production and delivery of goods should be managed in a limited time.

3.1.2. Deterrents (Preventing Factors) of Relationship Dissolution

Switching costs take many forms such as financial and emotional costs, also include future income that is left after making a switch (Petersen et al., 2000: 51). Petersen et al. (2000: 49) mention about the switching cost variables as an effective barrier to exit the relationship. The length of the relationship, contractual restrictions (contract period and notice of termination), and loss of local sales revenue are switching costs presented by Petersen et al. (2000: 51).

Ellis (2006: 1171) also adds a categorization of switching costs and deterrents to the literature. When switching costs increase, the satisfaction increases and the probability of dissolution decreases (2006: 1173). The level of satisfaction and the termination propensity is related to market-specific factors such as cultural distance to market and government restrictions limiting the integration options of foreign firms and relationship-specific factors such as contractual restrictions and exporter-specific and customer-specific investments made by the buyer (Ellis, 2006: 1175). In seller-intermediary relationships, seller's satisfaction with the intermediary performance is found to be a mediator of switching motivators/costs (Ellis, 2006: 1175). Switching costs are assumed to moderate the interaction between customer satisfaction and termination propensity, unlike prior studies assumed.

Transaction-Specific-Investment (TSI) as a dissolution barrier is studied by Kang et al. (2012: 253). The research of the authors illustrated that TSI is a full mediator of the effect of dissolution intention on cooperation, but a partial mediator of the effect of dissolution intention on opportunism. TSI is affected well by dissolution intention and affects cooperation and opportunism well (Kang et al., 2012: 263).

Ping (1999: 218) studied the cost to exit as an antecedent of relationship dissolution. Satisfaction and cost-of-exit plays a role in holding exit at bay (Ping, 1999: 233). Cost-of-exit is found to be a powerful attenuating factor, which increases

loyal behaviour even the satisfaction between firms is low. When loyal behaviour was in its possible highest level, cost-of-exit becomes higher and satisfaction becomes lower. When voice was in its possible highest level, cost-of-exit and satisfaction becomes higher. Another important finding of the Ping's (1999: 223) research is the term "structural commitment". If the costs of exiting a relationship are very high, then the party having a dissolution intention decides to stay in a relationship due to structural commitment. Dissatisfied firms may not leave their relationship because their cost-of-exit is too high and they will need time to physically decrease their cost-of-exit.

Another preventing factor is the performance level of the customer (Petersen et al., 2015: 330). In exporter-intermediary relationship, moderate performance of the intermediary rather than excellent must be sustained to preserve the relationship (Petersen et al., 2015: 334). The authors also proved that there are incentives for foreign intermediaries' performance. One way of exporters to support intermediaries in order to reveal their potential efforts is to apply hold-up safeguards against contract expiry. These safeguards include generous advance notification clauses and/or severance payment schemes, may help to form more trust-based relations with their foreign intermediaries. Exporters applying safeguards create a termination barrier to themselves, since these transactions are costly. Whereas monitoring as an anti-shirking measure is proved to be effective in increasing the intermediary performance, mentioned hold-up safeguards do not have an important effect. By the way, safeguards were helpful in diminishing exporters' probability to switch their intermediaries when there was the termination dilemma.

According to Baker et al. (1998: 167), stable market having a low level of competition is a preventing factor for buyer-seller relationship dissolution. In advertising agency-client relationships, advertising agencies prefer stable environment since they want to reserve their relationship ties. To do this, they assure their clients that the quality of their service is superior and costs of switching are very high. Institutional forces such as power, sales increase and financially strong customers are also proved to decrease the risk of dissolution. Sales increase is found to be positively related to the advertising agency-client relationship continuity, and clients which are financially strong have a tendency to preserve their agencies. The

reason of this is the financial success maintained by the effective advertising, so client wants to continue to work with that agency. Since they are powerful than the agency, large clients do not switch their agencies to prevent agency tactics such as reducing dependency and obtaining power.

Seabright et al. (1992: 122) also suggest individual and structural attachment as preventing factors. Individual attachments (personal ties), and structural attachments (inter-organizational ties) decrease the hazard of dissolution. Individual attachment occurs between actors of the business relationship parties in the form of personal skills, knowledge, and interpersonal relationships. The authors proved that individual attachment creates a dissolution barrier which decreases the probability of the dissolution. Furthermore, the attenuating effect of the individual attachment on change in resource needs on partner switching is supported by the Seabright et al.'s (1992: 152) research. Structural attachment refers to the organizational attachment, which includes the exchange agreement's formalization and standardization, strategies of inter-organizational management. Structural attachment in a business relationship is said to increase as the time goes by, but the effect of structural attachment on probability of dissolution could not be supported. Social bonds which are one of the commitment characteristics are also cited as affecting the decision of dissolution communication strategies (Giller and Matear, 2001: 98).

Besides its triggering role, personal relationship is also reported to have a promoting role to give up dissolution (Gedeon et al., 2009: 221). Personal affection has a positive impact on the future of the business relationship. Furthermore, emotional bonds of the relationship are not enough to save business relationship especially when there are economic problems.

Seabright et al. (1992: 144) also acknowledge the level of change in resource requirements, resource arrangements, and bundle of alternatives as a preventing factor. Seabright et al. (1992: 133) specified that firms pay attention for choosing the optimal partner which will provide needed resources among other alternatives. So, obtaining a resource fit between firm's needs of resources and partner's supply of resources is what business partners seek for in a relationship. While providing a resource fit, firms want to preserve their autonomy and power. If the resource needs

of firm are not satisfied or the power of firm is damaged, this partner may want the relationship to dissolve.

One of the preventing factors introduced by Beverland et al. (2004: 931) is the role of Supplier Initiated Value Change (SIVC) on supplier-customer relationship dissolution. SIVC is a tool that is used by suppliers to develop customer relationships through market actions and in an aim of managing customer relationships and value change, preventing dissolution and encouraging the renewal of relationship after dissolution.

Loyalty is also reported by Hirschman (1970) to be a deterrent factor of dissolution as loyalty is suggested to be hindering exit and encouraging voice. Ping (1994: 364) investigates that if satisfaction affects the relationship between the attractiveness of the alternative relationship and exit intention in a marketing channel, as assumed in prior research. Alternative attractiveness is studied as a competitor-related reason in the literature. Satisfaction is found to moderate the alternative attractiveness and exit intention relationship. When satisfaction level increases, the impact of the attenuating effect of satisfaction increases on the alternative attractiveness and exit intention association. That means, providing a superior customer service may lead to a more satisfaction of a customer and may decrease exit intention by eliminating the competitor's attractive actions.

3.2. THE CATEGORIZATION OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION REASONS

Since the dissolution is an inevitable consequence of buyer-seller relationship maintenance and development, several factors have a negative effect on the relationship. Only satisfaction does not lead to dissolution of the seller-intermediary relationship, there are some other factors that motivate this decision (Petersen et al., 2015: 323).

As the literature discusses, the causes of dissolution in buyer-seller relationship seem to be related to a mix of buyer, supplier and competitor factors (Perrien et al., 1995: 319; Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 138). Little is known in terms of the causes of export relationship dissolution (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 133).

Throughout the literature, there have been several attempts to categorize the reasons of relationship dissolution (Perrien et al., 1995; Pressey and Mathews, 2003; Pressey and Selassie, 2007; Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009).

The author attempts to gather reasons of buyer-seller relationship dissolution discussed throughout the literature (see Table 4). Relationships may be ended by a joint decision of the firm and its customer. Also, firm or customer may initiate the dissolution bilaterally. There are six groups of reasons of dissolution in buyer-seller relationships. Firm-related reasons form the first category, in which the dissolution is initiated by buyer/customer. Second category is customer-related reasons or another naming of it is seller-initiated reasons. The third category of reasons is relational, which also consists of behavioral and structural reasons of buyer-seller relationship dissolution. The fourth category of reasons is external, which are out of the control of the firm such as environmental and competitor-related reasons. The fifth category is other reasons. Bilateral ending reasons form the sixth category of reasons.

Table 4. Categories of Reasons of Buyer-Seller Relationship Throughout the Literature

Categories of Reasons	Subcategories of Reasons
1. Firm-Related Reasons	Product-related, price-related, employee-related, customer service and management problems, customer's business needed a change (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009)
2. Customer-Related Reasons	Customer no longer profitable/unprofitability (Helm et al., 2006; Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009; Payan et al., 2009; Pressey and Mathews, 2003), opportunistic behaviour of customer (Pressey and Selassie, 2007; Kang et al., 2012), contract breaches of buyer (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), the product deletion of the seller (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), acquisition of customer's company (Pressey and Selassie, 2007), the preference for a local or an alternative supplier (Grønhaug et al., 1999; Pressey and Mathews, 2003)/switching to another supplier (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), intermediary performance (Ellis, 2006; Petersen et al., 2015), customer's business needed a change (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009)
3. Relational Reasons: a) Relational/Behavioral Reasons	Relationship commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Tsiros et al., 2009), satisfaction (Durden et al., 1997; Ellis, 2006; Giller and Matear, 2001; Hocutt, 1998; Ping, 1993; Ping, 1994; Ping, 1995; Ping, 1997, Ping, 1999; Yang et al., 2012), trust (Giller and Matear, 2001; Payan et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2012), personal relationship-related, opportunism (Kang et al., 2012), unresolved conflict initiated by buyer/seller (Gedeon et

	al., 2009; Pressey and Selassie, 2007; Yang et al., 2012), communication problems (Beloucif et al., 2006; Pressey and Mathews, 2003), mutual ignorance (Hallén and Johanson, 2004)
b) Relational/Structural Reasons	Relative dependence (Hocutt, 1998; Yang et al., 2012), investment in a relationship (Hocutt, 1998; Ping, 1993), closeness (Giller and Matear, 2001; Hocutt, 1998), relationship duration (Giller and Matear, 2001; Hocutt, 1998; Ping, 1995), loyalty (Hirschman, 1974; Ping, 1999), unfairness (Yang et al., 2012), goal incongruence (Yang et al., 2012), complacency (Beverland et al., 2009)
4. External Reasons: a) External/Competitor-Related Reasons	Availability of alternatives (Hirschman, 1974; Ping, 1993; Ping, 1994), alternative attractiveness (Hallén and Johanson, 2004; Hirschman, 1974; Stewart, 1998; Yang et al., 2012), competition (Baker et al., 1998)
b) External/Environmental Reasons:	Poor economic/market conditions (Pressey and Selassie, 2007), high geographic distance (Hallén and Johanson, 2004; Pressey and Selassie, 2007), high cultural background differences (Pressey and Selassie, 2007; Vaaland et al. 2004), thin network (Hallén and Johanson, 2004), third party decision (Giller and Matear, 2001), a triggering event (Giller and Matear, 2001), distance to the intermediary (Petersen et al., 2000)
5. Other Reasons	The likelihood of success in the case of voice (Hirschman, 1970), revenue (Ping, 1995), market factors (Ellis, 2006), the availability of managerial resources (Ellis, 2006), product complexity (Ellis, 2006), information asymmetry (Petersen et al., 2000), increased experience in dealing with foreign intermediaries (Petersen et al., 2000)
6. Bilateral Ending Reasons	Changed customer needs (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), changes in the seller's services (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), pressure from outside of the dyad/ wider network (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), markets in decline due to economic factors (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), contract expiry (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), the relationship becomes unimportant and unprofitable to both parties (Pressey and Mathews, 2003)

3.2.1. Firm-Related Reasons

Pressey and Mathews (2003: 137) refer this category as the most studied among others. Attempts to gather firm-related reasons are performed by Perrien et al. (1995); Pressey and Mathews (2003), and Pressey and Selassie (2007). Attempt to

gather firm-related reasons according to initiator party is performed by Holmlund and Hobbs (2009: 274). In this study, firm is an exporter/seller of the product to foreign customers and ending is initiated by customer because of seller's fault. It can be also called as buyer-initiated ending reasons. Perrien et al. (1995: 267) state that the dissolution decision is given by the customer due to seller's behaviours and policies. This category can be further divided into five subcategories in order to present information properly and combine related reasons into one heading (see Table 4).

The first subcategory is product-related reasons. Pressey and Selassie (2007: 140) also named this category as "product defectors". From the literature, several items under this subcategory are stated: product no longer needed (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 140), not extensive enough product line (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 140), product unsatisfactory (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 140), lack of required product knowledge (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 140), standard of seller creative work (Durden et al., 1997: 66), low perceived value of the product (Hirschman, 1970: 47), decline in quality (Hirschman, 1970: 47), customer unsatisfied with the quality of service (Beloucif et al., 2006: 39), technical or functional quality reasons (Beloucif et al., 2006: 40). Hirschman (1970: 47) cites that customer who values the quality will immediately switch to another supplier when the quality deteriorates. An example of technical quality problems is given by Beloucif et al. (2006: 40) that being unable to compete with others in servicing to customers or unable to perform tasks timely. Functional quality problems may be being unable to follow-up the tasks and unable to form a strong chemistry with the customer because of inadequate communication procedures (Beloucif et al., 2006: 40).

The second subcategory is price-related reasons which includes two referred items of high price (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 137; Perrien et al., 1995: 321), and excessive cost considerations in sales agreement (Friend et al., 2013: 1127). Excessive cost considerations include proposals which are uneven cost sharing perceived by buyers as more costs included on their side and costs are more than communicated benefits of proposal (Friend et al., 2013: 1130). Excessive cost considerations also include three sub items: greater costs, lack of cost justification, and negative cost implications.

The third subcategory is named employee-related problems. It also consists of items; unhappiness with Exporter Account Manager (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 137), Account Manager turnover (Perrien et al., 1995: 326), lack of training and experience (Perrien et al., 1995: 326), change in personnel (Beloucif et al., 2006: 42). Account manager turnover is reported to be the second important dissolution reason after internal management procedures in Perrien et al.'s, (1995: 320) banking industry research.

The fourth subcategory is customer service and management problems. Changes in customer marketing policies and customer management (Durden et al., 1997), changes in firm policies (Durden et al., 1997), customer service policies (Perrien et al., 1995), seller no longer offers the required services (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), inability to identify customer needs (Perrien et al., 1995), non-adaptive sales proposal (Friend et al., 2013), non-relational sales proposal (Friend et al., 2013), and dissatisfaction of customer (Durden et al., 1997; Pressey and Selassie, 2007) are reported by prior research as subcategory items. Non-adaptive sales proposal means that seller is unwilling or unable to understand buyer's needs and not successful to offer customized solution to buyer's needs (Friend et al., 2013: 1128). Buyers also tend to see sellers as having a selling orientation without organizational flexibility (Friend et al., 2013: 1128). Items of this subcategory are lack of understanding of buyer requirements, lack of adaptive capabilities, and lack of an adaptive attitude. Non-relational sales proposal is seen when seller does not communicate explicitly the relational benefits of the sales proposal to buyer (Friend et al., 2013: 1129). Items of this subcategory are reported as inadequate collaboration, broken trust, and relational entry barriers.

3.2.2. Customer-Related Reasons

In this category, seller is ending the relationship due to customer/buyer fault or customer-related changes lead seller to end the relationship. Attempts to gather customer-related reasons are performed by Perrien et al. (1995); Pressey and Mathews (2003); Pressey and Selassie (2007). Seller-initiated ending is also used by Holmlund and Hobbs (2009: 274). These reasons also consist of several

subcategories (see Table 4).

The first subcategory is customer becoming no longer profitable/unprofitability. According to the research of Holmlund and Hobbs (2009: 282), customer becoming no longer profitable is the most common reason among customer-related reasons. Unprofitability is also used by researchers in the literature to refer customer becoming no longer profitable many times (Helm et al., 2006: 373; Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 137). Payan et al. (2009: 1199) also referred to this category by mentioning economic performance of an importer as a reason of dissolution. Petersen et al. (2015: 321) mentioned market performance of the importer and satisfaction of exporter which points out the same category. Pressey and Mathews (2003: 138) declare that seller starts to see unprofitable customer as a burden in many cases. The study of Petersen et al. (2015: 324) in seller-intermediary relationship found evidence that termination dilemma in foreign distribution exists since both low and high performers of intermediary may be in danger of relationship ending, so moderate performance rather than excellent must be sustained to preserve the relationship.

The second subcategory is opportunistic behaviour of customer which is referred by Kang et al. (2012), and Pressey and Selassie (2007). Opportunistic behaviour means finding a pretext to dissolve a relationship. For example, Pressey and Selassie (2007: 137) noted a respondent conveying that a foreign customer used a dissatisfying incident which is late delivery for the first time, to dissolve a relationship by magnifying the incident. The third reported subcategory of customer-related reason in the literature is contract breaches of buyer (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009). Their research noted a seller firm's respondent had experienced a situation like this and ended the relationship before the expiry of contract and never reactivated the relationship.

The fourth reason subcategory is the product deletion of the seller due to competitive activities, poor product quality, low sales volume and external factors (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 137). This is the purposive decision and strategic action of a seller. According to Pressey and Mathews (2003: 137), it is used as an excuse to leave unwanted importer without telling the truth of bad performance or product. The fifth subcategory is intermediary performance which is below the firm

expectation. It creates dissatisfaction and triggers relationship dissolution (Ellis, 2006: 1172). Besides the accurate effect of low performance of the intermediary on the dissolution, Petersen et al. (2015: 335) found evidence that high performance of the intermediary may constitute a danger of relationship ending. The existence of the termination dilemma in foreign distribution is supported with their study.

The sixth subcategory is the preference for a local or alternative supplier/switching to another supplier. Preference for a local supplier is based on internal reason of a seller, so it is customer-related reason. Preference for a local supplier (Grønhaug et al., 1999; Pressey and Mathews, 2003), change of seller and switching to another supplier (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 145) are mentioned as the reasons by the researchers. The seventh subcategory is customer's business needed a change (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009: 274) is also mentioned as the reason by the researchers. The eighth subcategory is the acquisition of customer's company, which is referred by Pressey and Selassie (2007: 137).

3.2.3. Relational Reasons

3.2.3.1. Relational/ Behavioral Reasons

Relational/ Behavioral reasons form the third category which covers several reasons reported by prior research (see Table 4). Relational reason is used as a category before by Tidström and Ahman (2006: 281) in order to discuss the reasons of dissolving a joint company. The first subcategory, relationship commitment in a relationship is one of the most important relational/behavioral reason (Tsiros et al., 2009: 263) They designate that when commitment increases, the exploration of alternative partners decreases. However, high level of commitment does not result in lower interest of alternative partners' evaluation (Tsiros et al. 2009: 271). Morgan and Hunt (1994: 25) suggest that relationship dissolution is found to be flourished directly from relationship commitment and there is a negative relationship between inter-organizational commitment and propensity to leave the organization.

From commitment characteristics; the second subcategory is satisfaction (Durden et al., 1997; Ellis, 2006; Giller and Mear, 2001; Hocutt, 1998; Ping, 1993; Ping, 1994; Ping, 1995; Ping, 1997, Ping, 1999). In Ping's (1993: 344) research,

satisfaction was found to be positively related to exiting, voice and neglect. However, satisfaction was found to be negatively related to loyalty and opportunism. After the exposure of trigger, dissatisfaction realizes and reaction emerges accordingly in a form of voice, exit or neglect (Giller and Matear, 2001: 99). Ellis (2006: 1173) also proposed that customer dissatisfaction triggers seeking of new distributors and dissolution of the existing relationship. However, customer satisfaction may also lead to dissolution of the relationship, since the market seems too profitable to be served alone.

The third subcategory trust is also reported by several researchers (Payan et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2012) belongs to relational/behavioral reasons. The research of Yang et al. (2012: 1110) found evidence that trust affects the dissolution decision positively and diminishes the effect of unfairness on dissolution intention. Yang et al. (2012: 1111) also assert that trust negatively affected conflict's damage on relationship dissolution and larger trust in a relationship lead more destructive damage on it, resulting in an intent to leave the relationship. Their research emphasized both effects of trust; strengthening and damaging the relationship when there is a conflict and damaging effect ends up with dissolution.

The fourth subcategory is personal relationship-related reasons. As Gedeon et al. (2009: 218) state, personal relationships have triggering role in relationship dissolution. Personal communication is crucial since individuals are managing the inter-firm relations. Perrien et al. (1995: 321) speak of that the interactions of firm's employees with the customer's employees have a crucial role in relationship dissolution. Poor personal or working relationship (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 137), buyer-seller personality conflict (Durden et al., 1997: 66), relationship weakness (Perrien et al., 1995: 321), not maintaining strong links with the foreign customer (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 138), unhappy customer with Account Manager (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 139) are items in subcategory of personal relationship-related reasons.

The fifth subcategory is opportunism. Having a dissolution intention will make actors look for another partner and behave according to self-interest; resulting in opportunistic behaviours, not thinking of the well-being of ex-partner (Kang et al.,

2012: 264). After opportunism has increased, the buyer's dependence on seller decreases and there is no more need to cooperate with the seller.

The sixth subcategory is unresolved conflict initiated by buyer/seller (Pressey and Selassie 2007; Yang et al., 2012). According to Yang et al. (2012: 1110), conflict is accepted not affecting dissolution intention precisely, when relationship dependence and alternative attractiveness exist in a relationship. Besides, the study of Gedeon et al. (2009: 219) show that business conflict may result in negative feelings and these feelings may incline to absurd behaviors of individuals and then damage the relationship.

The seventh subcategory is communication problems (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 142). Having links with the wrong people is offered by Pressey and Selassie (2007: 139) as the item in this subcategory. Beloucif et al. (2006: 41) noted a respondent conveying that the clarity and frequency of communication between parties is important.

Mutual ignorance is mentioned as a dissolution reason subcategory by Hallén and Johanson (2004), and it forms the ninth subcategory. Ignorance means that firms do not know each other's employees and firms or market. In the planned Russian economy, the management of relationships was not allowed, so employees and firms did not know each other well (Hallén and Johanson, 2004: 942). When the planned economy was destroyed, the reality of the relationship's nature came to light, which was weak and fragile, then many relationships were dissolved (Hallén and Johanson, 2004: 944).

3.2.3.2. Relational/ Structural Reasons

This reason category refers to ties and bonds that form a successful relationship. It includes several subcategories (see Table 4). From the commitment characteristics; relative dependence (Yang et al., 2012: 110) forms the first subcategory of this reason, which is related to the structure of the relationship. Hocutt (1998: 193) asserts that there is a positive association between relative dependence on the seller and level of commitment to the relationship. The second subcategory is investment in a relationship (Ping, 1993), which is one of the

commitment characteristics. It also provides a dissolution barrier like switching costs (Hocutt, 1998: 193).

Closeness (Hocutt, 1998) is also reported to be a subcategory of relational/structural reasons category, which forms the third one. Hocutt (1998: 194) defined a close relationship as involving high interdependence. High prior closeness of the relationship affects terminating firm's strategy, causing to use less indirect and more other-oriented strategies (Giller and Matear, 2001: 105).

The fourth one is relationship duration (Giller and Matear, 2001: 105; Hocutt, 1998: 194) which is one of the commitment characteristics under this category. As Michalski (2004: 986) reported in bank-personal customer relationship, both high level of commitment and very long duration of the relationship are not able to determine the continuity of bank-customer relationship, as customers may end the relationship.

The fifth subcategory is loyalty which is offered by Hirschman (1974: 76) as a reason. According to the research of Ping (1999: 231), if loyal behaviour decreases, voice increases rather than exit or neglect. Unfairness is the sixth subcategory of reason that belongs to structural category. Yang et al.'s (2012: 1110) research findings accentuate the mediating effect of trust on unfairness on dissolution intention and contributed to the extensive research on the construct of fairness.

Goal incongruence is the seventh one which is presented by Yang et al. (2012: 1110). It means that companies have different objectives. It makes the communication and cooperation harder between partners since conflict is more likely to occur. The authors proved that goal incongruence was a crucial influencer of the dissolution decisions; as parties are more likely to dissolve the relationship with its existence. Complacency is referred by Beverland et al. (2009: 933) forms the eighth subcategory of this reasons and it acknowledges advertising agency-customer relationships. According to the authors, advertising agencies are aware of the fact that being proactive prevents customer perception of complacency.

3.2.4. External Reasons

3.2.4.1. External/Competitor-Related Reasons

Competitor-related reasons are discussed before by Perrien et al. (1995); Pressey and Selassie (2007). Competitor action is a dissolution motive for customers/buyers to switch to another supplier as Pressey and Selassie (2007: 138) declare. An example from Pressey and Selassie's (2007: 138) research, an export manager conveying that maintaining a long-term relationship with foreign customer is hard task, since commercial pressures could change customers' mind. These reasons are comprised of several subcategories (see Table 4).

The first subcategory is alternative attractiveness (Hirschman, 1974; Ping, 1993; Ping, 1994). Some researchers named alternative attractiveness differently (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009; Pressey and Selassie, 2007). According to Pressey and Selassie (2007: 139), better price, better alternative product line, better alternative offering and better personal relationship of a competitor are the reasons related to competitor actions. Obtaining a better price from competitor is ranked first among all other categories of reasons in their study. Holmlund and Hobbs (2009) utilized better offer to define this subcategory. The alternative attractiveness was found to be positively related to exiting in Ping's (1993: 344) research. Ping (1994: 370) supported that relationship satisfaction moderates the association between alternative attractiveness and exit intention. That is when satisfaction is low, alternative attractiveness causes exit intention and vice versa.

The second subcategory, availability of alternatives (Hallén and Johanson, 2004; Hirschman, 1974; Stewart, 1998; Yang et al., 2012) forms the second category. In Russia, after the collapse of planned economy, the market economy brought new rights to firms, partners became free to choose their partners (Hallén and Johanson, 2004: 952). As there was a low interdependence between buyers and sellers, buyer switched to new seller that offered cheaper prices.

Competition is the third subcategory that Baker et al. (1998) mentioned about. Buyers and sellers differ in their market stability concerns and competition level in the market (Baker et al., 1998: 148). In the advertising agency-client relationship,

buyers make use of the competition by enjoying benefits of higher quality and better service, so they prefer an unstable market. So, stable market means low competition and it triggers the dissolution of the business relationship. Unstable market which has a high level of competition is a triggering factor for buyer-seller relationship dissolution.

3.2.4.2. External/Environmental Reasons

Pressey and Selassie (2007) mentioned environmental reasons including negative impact of business environment and cultural differences. Environmental reasons, composed of different dimensions are also listed (see Table 4). Poor economic/market conditions form the first subcategory of environmental reasons. A large-scale recession ends up with inability of buyer to buy products.

Second subcategory noted is high geographic distance (Hallén and Johanson, 2004; Pressey and Selassie, 2007). In example from Pressey and Selassie's (2007: 138) research, respondent reports that not focusing on serving to geographically distant foreign customers with all the resources of the seller may lead a relationship dissolution, as it makes relationship delicate.

The third subcategory is high cultural background differences which is reported by Pressey and Selassie (2007). Also, Vaaland et al. (2004) studied culture as a predisposing factor in relationship dissolution. Vaaland et al. (2004: 21) argued that cultural distance existed in the relationship since it was formed. If managers are not aware of it or are not able to handle cultural diversity, the relationship becomes more sensitive to dissolution.

The fourth subcategory of reason is thin network, which is referred by Hallén and Johanson (2004). A thin network means there is no sufficient motivators to stay in a relationship (Hallén and Johanson, 2004: 944). When thin network exists, firms are detached from each other and firms' boundaries are narrow. So, firms become more vulnerable to external events and environmental changes, in the end relationship dissolution as the authors state.

The fifth subcategory is the third party decision which means pressure from outside of the relationship given by buyer/supplier's head office (Giller and Matear,

2001: 104) or buyer's parent company in order to switch to sellers in their family network (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 148). The sixth subcategory is a triggering event. According to Giller and Matear (2001: 99), a triggering event leads to dissatisfaction of a partner and dissatisfaction continues to broaden until the termination affects both parties and the connected network. After the exposure of the trigger, dissatisfaction realizes and reaction emerges accordingly in a form of voice, exit or neglect.

The eighth one is distance to the intermediary, both short and long distance may lead to dissolution according to Petersen et al. (2000: 58). Short distance gives a chance to exporters monitor the activities and performance of the intermediary by visiting. However, this is not possible in the long distance relationships. So, in long distance relationships, exporters seek for alternative local intermediaries. In distant markets, cultural and linguistic differences are likely to occur, so communication problems existence is more likely that lead to a dissolution in the end.

3.2.4.3. Other Reasons

The reasons that are not related to customer or seller fault, external factors and competitor actions are grouped in this category. The first subcategory is the likelihood of success in the case of voice (Hirschman, 1970: 88) as a reason (see Table 4). Since there were two options available for dissatisfied customers, the failure of voice would lead to exit.

The second subcategory is revenue. Ping (1995:171) studied the effect of revenue as an economic variable and productivity measures (revenue-per-employee, return on investment) on dissolution intention of firms. These productivity measures are items of revenue subcategory. Revenue is proved to have a negative effect on exit intention. When revenue increases, firm refrains from dissolution of a relationship. Moreover, when firms decided to change their partners and launch a stable relationship with alternative partner, their revenue gets better. However, return on investment (ROI) assured to have a positive effect on exit intention unlike the hypothesis in Ping's (1995: 176) research. Revenue-per-employee is found to be negatively associated with exit intention since there is a significant positive

association between revenue-per-employee and revenue. Besides, the number of competitive stores affects negatively the exit intention surprisingly. But, there is no association between the number of years the retailers did business with their wholesalers, the years the retailers were in business and their exit intention.

The third subcategory is market factors (Ellis, 2006). As markets grow, they become attractive to serve (Ellis, 2006: 1173). So, firms expect to increase their profitability through increased customer performance (the relationship between seller and intermediary is mentioned). If intermediaries cannot increase their sales volume, then firms end their relationships with their intermediaries.

The fourth subcategory is the organizational capabilities of the firm which are the availability of managerial resources have a triggering role of the relationship dissolution (Ellis, 2006). As firms become more internationalized, their market experience increases and they seek to adopt a more global marketing strategies (Ellis, 2006: 1174). When managers are ready, the relationship is ended and firm launches its own distribution department. The fifth referred subcategory is product complexity (Ellis, 2006). As products become more complex and more quality control of the intermediary is needed, the probability of relationship dissolution increases (Ellis, 2006: 1174).

The sixth subcategory is information asymmetry. Petersen et al. (2000: 58) present that information asymmetry exists between buyers and sellers. In exporter-intermediary relationships, information asymmetry means that both exporter and the intermediary does not recognize each others' product and market characteristics such as their identity, product preferences, buying behavior. Exporters seem to think that intermediaries tend to shirk and they need to be controlled. If exporters control them more, they will understand that this prejudice is not true. By monitoring the intermediaries, exporters' tendency to replace them decreases, so low controllability of the intermediary by the exporter is a trigger of dissolution.

The eighth mentioned subcategory is increased experience in dealing with foreign intermediaries, which leads to an increase in exporter's ability to make better decisions of intermediary selection (Petersen et al., 2000: 59). In exporter-intermediary relationship, the length of the relationship is proposed as motivator of

dissolution. Authors claimed that knowing the intermediary for a long time brings an advantage of market knowledge which is known as “the learning effect”, and exporter becomes willing to replace the intermediary. This can be explained by the concept of learning in the internationalization process; which means as times goes by and exporters gain experience day by day, they can evaluate the actual performance of the intermediary and alternative courses of action. As the relationship becomes older, intermediaries are proved to be more likely to be replaced by the exporter.

3.2.4.4. Bilateral Ending Reasons

Relationships may also be ended by a mutual agreement of two parties, both actors want the relationship dissolved (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009: 275; Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 141). It includes environmental reasons, firm-related reasons, and customer-related reasons. As Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 168) described, episodic relationship is formed for a specific limited time period for a purpose and it dissolves after the completion of the purpose. These types of relationships are bilaterally ended. Whatever triggered a joint decision can be a reason of mutually agreed dissolution. The firms that bilaterally ended the relationship pointed out that, in spite of good relations with the partner, both parties agreed to end the relationship (Pressey and Mathews, 2003: 143). However, it is a revocable decision; that means parties may reactivate the relationship.

The reasons generally stated are related to not getting benefits of the relationship. Since the parties decide to end the relationship mutually, the communication is amicable. Some reported reason subcategories related to this category are changed customer needs (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), changes in the seller’s services (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), pressure from outside of the dyad/ wider network (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), markets in decline due to economic factors (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), contract expiry (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), and the relationship becomes unimportant and unprofitable to both parties (Pressey and Mathews, 2003) (see Table 4).

CHAPTER 4

THE BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION PROCESS MODELS

4.1. THE PROCESS MODEL OF BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

Several researchers point out the need for bringing a definition to dissolution process and bringing a categorization of the dissolution (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002), and the information available is limited (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000; Kang et al., 2012; Perrien et al., 1995; Pressey and Mathews, 2003; Tähtinen, 2002). Besides, several researchers supported the idea that relationship dissolution is regarded as a process with several stages (Giller and Matear, 2001; Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002; Ping and Dwyer, 1992; Tähtinen, 2002). Also, several actors are performing in the dissolution process such as two firms and both firms' employees, departments (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002). In table 5, the dissolution process is categorized according to the research in the literature of buyer-seller relationship dissolution.

Table 5. Firm-Customer Relationship Dissolution Process

The Research	Relationship Dissolution Stages
Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997)	Intrapersonal, intracompany, dyadic, triadic, network and aftermath stages
Halinen and Tähtinen (2002)	Assessment, decision-making, dyadic communication, disengagement, network communication and aftermath stages
Tähtinen (2002)	Consideration, communication, restoration, disengagement, enabling, sensemaking, aftermath stages
Tidström and Ahman (2006)	Pre-start, harmony, the consideration, disengagement, communication, post-ending stages
Schreiner (2015)	Sub-process of voicing, sub-process of analyzing, sub-process of disengaging, aftermath sub-process.
Beloucif et al., (2006)	New relationship: contacting, new relationship: prospecting, mature relationship: tendering, mature relationship: contracting and mature relationship: pre-renewal
Giller and Matear (2001)	Triggering event, dissatisfaction, reaction: voice/exit/neglect

4.1.1. The Process Model of Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997)

All process stages may not occur and the order may change according to the type of relationship and the death (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 576). The process starts with intrapersonal stage, any actor responsible of the relationship's maintenance may start it by assessing the relationship problems. Then, this actor decides to end the continuous relationship, this actor brings this problem to intracompany stage. If this actor does not have the authority to end relationships, it tries to convince the firm that termination will be beneficial. By reviewing switching costs and consequences of the dissolution on the firm's future, firm decides to exit or use voice. Exit strategy is related to seeking out new partner but voice strategy tries to repair the relationship by discussing the problems with the partner firm. If parties follow repairing process, the dissolution process may stop. If the actor is unsuccessful, unwilling to repair the relationship or does not use voice, the process will continue in the next stage. However, before stating this decision to the partner, actor has to decide which communication strategy of dissolution to use.

Next one is dyadic stage, where the exit decision is expressed directly or indirectly, other or self-oriented (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 574). Business relationship and resource ties start to decrease. Agreements related to disengagement; proprietary rights, copyrights, contract penalties or final invoices have to be discussed, which is time consuming. A new actor enters into the relationship dissolution in the triadic stage. It is also possible to end the process in this stage by performing repairing activities.

In the network stage, the consequences of dissolution to all partners should be managed (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 575). Also, the official announcement of dissolution of relationship to the entire network actors is required. The last stage is aftermath, where all resource ties are broken but the process is not finished. All members of the triad create their perception of reasons of relationship dissolution to convey within their firm and network actors. This stage includes all actor levels and according to Keyton (1993) understanding the ending occurs, the reasons of it was captured and mentally the company relaxes itself (as cited in Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 575). According to Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila (1997:

582); all members of the triad create their perception of reasons of relationship dissolution to convey within their firm and network actors. As the authors suggest, this provides a learning of how to manage relationships and processes of dissolution for their future relationships.

4.1.2. The Process Model of Halinen and Tähtinen (2002)

Halinen and Tähtinen (2002: 173) also contributed to the literature by providing a categorization of dissolution process into seven stages and include individual and/or company level, dyadic level and network level. These stages are: assessment, decision-making, dyadic communication, disengagement, network communication and aftermath stages. The first stage is the assessment stage, where company or department are involved, initiator actor reviews the reasons of this intention by analyzing predisposing factors, precipitating events and attenuating factors.

The second stage is the decision-making stage, where two options are available for the initiator actor: voice or exit (Helper, 1993; Hirschman, 1975), which is from Hirschman's (1975) exit, voice or loyalty strategy (as cited in Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 173). Using an exit strategy leads to an end of the relationship and new partner is sought. However, adopting a voice strategy gives a chance to restore the relationship by discussing the reasons and restoring actions to be taken. The ending process may cease, if the restoration process becomes successful.

The third stage is the dyadic communication stage, where two parties set up interaction with each other and either direct or indirect communication strategies are used to convey either exit or voice is selected (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 174). Also, behaving self-oriented or other-oriented communication strategy is determined. The fourth stage is disengagement, which starts if the restoration attempts fail or agreement between parties cannot be provided on restoration steps. In this stage, business exchange becomes minimal and therefore the existing resource ties diminish.

The fifth stage is network communication (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002: 174) where actors of relationship handle consequences of dissolution on all actors in the

network. Also, the official announcement of dissolution of relationship to the entire network actors is required as the authors declared. Network communication, assessment and dyadic communication stages are realized simultaneously. The sixth stage is aftermath, where all resource ties and actor bonds are broken but the process is not finished. In this stage, dissolution is realized and parties assess the events mentally.

4.1.3. The Process Model of Tähtinen (2002)

Tähtinen (2002) also provided the empirically grounded framework of relationship ending process in her research. The model of Halinen and Tähtinen (2002) was changed. Firstly, this framework united dyadic and network communication stages and called it communication stage (Tähtinen, 2002: 335). Secondly, assessment and decision-making stages were combined and named consideration stage; and adjoin the sensemaking behaviour to the aftermath stage. Thirdly, a new stage was added to the process which name is enabling stage. Tähtinen's (2002) process model consists of seven stages: consideration, communication, restoration, disengagement, sensemaking/aftermath, enabling stages. Furthermore, four actor levels were included in each model: individual, company, dyad, and network levels. The consideration stage is the first stage, where initiator party questions whether or not continue the relationship including all actors' decision-making behaviour.

The second stage is communication stage which includes interaction between two parties (Tähtinen, 2002: 335). This stage contains all actor levels and their communications with each other to realize the given decision about relationship's future by using exit or voice. Unlike exit strategy, adopting voice enables both parties to attempt survival of relationship depending on the efforts of the parties. The third one; restoration stage is realized if parties accept to save the relationship by using voice strategy.

The fourth stage is disengagement, which starts if the restoration attempts fail or agreement between parties cannot be provided on restoration steps (Tähtinen, 2002). In this stage, business exchange becomes minimal and therefore the existing

resource ties, actor bonds, and activity links diminish (Tähtinen, 2002; Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002). The fifth stage is enabling stage is added to the process by Tähtinen (2002) as a new stage which also includes seeking new business partners. The disengagement enables ending of the relationship possible together with the prosecution of enabling stage, so exit barriers are reduced and attenuating factors' impact fade away.

The sixth stage is the sensemaking/aftermath stage, which is the last one that serves to understand the process of dissolution and preserve actors mentally by assuring themselves they did not make mistakes during the process (sensemaking), and after the process (aftermath) (Tähtinen, 2002: 335).

The model of Tähtinen (2002: 350) helps to break down the complex process and provide more detailed picture. The case study in this research approved that there are several different combinations of stages, some of them may be realized concurrently and the process is a vicious cycle that actors may turn back to prior stages (Tähtinen, 2002: 335). It is a flexible model to suit to the complex process of dissolution.

4.1.4. The Process Model of Schreiner (2015)

Triadic business relationship ending process is presented by Schreiner (2015) step by step, starting with voicing, which is prepared based on real case study (Schreiner, 2015: 896). The process includes these stages: sub-process of voicing, sub-process of analyzing the triadic relationship, sub-process of disengaging the triadic business relationship and the aftermath sub-process. In the sub-process of voicing stage, dissatisfied end users use voice to make service provider change the service. However, if service provider is unable to address the problems, end users' only viable option is forming an external coalition with the media to increase their effect of voice.

When sub-process of analyzing the triadic relationship begins, the bad reputation of service provider in the media worsens the situation and Service Provider 1 (SP1) starts to seek ways of ending the relationship, performs enabling actions to decrease the damage of dissolution (Schreiner, 2015: 897). Customers also

start to perform enabling actions by looking for alternative partners since voice is not successful. Service Provider 2 (SP2) is selected as a new partner and the relationship is ended with SP1 in the sub-process of disengaging the triadic business relationship. In the aftermath stage, actors assess and analyze the events. Also, actors learn from their experiences in this stage.

4.1.5. The Process Model of Beloucif et al. (2006)

Beloucif et al. (2006) brought systems perspective to the relationship dissolution in the insurance industry. Since this industry has a cyclical process, the dissolution may be realized anywhere and anytime through the relationship development (Beloucif et al., 2006: 30). So, authors convey that dissolution is not caused by actions in a row, through the interaction process relationship ending may be realized.

Systems perspective includes situation dimensions, structural and process dimensions, and dissolution outcomes (Beloucif et al., 2006: 35). Situational dimensions refer to the environment that brokers and their clients are in. It is separated into two dimensions, internal environmental and external environmental conditions. These two dimensions influence the interaction process (contacting, prospecting, tendering, contracting and pre-renewal), and also the process of relationship ending. Structural and process dimensions were described as an information-gathering process and it is more structured. The outcome dimensions show the outcome of interactions between insurance brokers and clients. This dimension may refer to an ending a relationship, or may continuing the relationship. In every stage, several factors are likely to affect the relationship development and cause dissolution.

In the first stage; contacting, insurance brokers obtain customers and get information via several ways (telephone, letter, fax, e-mail) (Beloucif et al., 2006: 36). It is the first stage of the relationship development stages, which is pre-relationship stage. Parties get to know each other and have a meeting to learn about their expectations from a relationship. If this stage is successful, then new business or marketing stage starts for relationship development.

The second stage is named as prospecting, in which parties decide to work together or not. If it does not end, the third stage starts which is tendering (Beloucif et al., 2006: 40). Communication increases and agency starts to act as an agent of a company. The management of relationship is very important in this stage since more than normal effort is required to make customer satisfied from the service.

The third stage is tendering, where formal commerce started (Beloucif et al., 2006: 41). Termination is most probable due to technical reasons. Also, timely advice is important in this stage. Fourth stage is contracting, which is characterized by very frequent communication. Service failures are more likely to lead a dissolution in this stage.

The fifth stage is pre-renewal, which includes a renewal of the agreement of the relationship (Beloucif et al., 2006: 42). If it continues, the relationship turns to stage three; the stage where the relationship is started. If there exists some problems with the relationship, they are discussed in the problem claims or complaints stage. There is a chance to address problems and continue the relationship whereas vice versa is possible.

4.1.6. The Process of Dissolution by Giller and Matear (2001)

Giller and Matear (2001: 99) divided process of dissolution into triggering event, dissatisfaction and reaction in the form of voice or exit or neglect based on prior research and characteristics of inter-firm relationships.

The process starts with the triggers leading to a dissatisfaction of a customer (Giller and Matear, 2001: 99). A triggering event continues to broaden until the termination affects both parties and the connected network. Termination of relationship may not happen because of the trigger even it causes the termination process. Dissatisfaction is realized after the exposal of trigger, and it forms the next stage. The last stage of Giller and Matear's (2001: 101) process is reaction in a form of voice, exit or neglect. Commitment, satisfaction, alternative attractiveness and investment, along with their compensatory characteristics such as trust, social bonds, relative dependence, closeness and duration affects termination strategies used by

firms. Two parties may handle the termination differently and may produce positive or negative opinions.



CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION MANAGEMENT

Several authors investigated the relationship management with respect to the relationship dissolution management (Pick, 2010; Ritter and Geersbro, 2011). Additional information about relationship dissolution will contribute to both academic researchers and managers in order to develop and maintain longer buyer-seller relationships (Ping, 1999: 218). Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1271) state that the outcome of some relationship's dissolution is not always negative, since it may help firms to transfer unprofitable relationships' idle resources to beneficial relationships. Tähtinen et al. (2007: 233) convey that relationship dissolution process should be managed skillfully in order not to damaging both parties. Being aware of both parties' expectations is helpful for improvement of process management and this enables managers to be prepared and easily manage the process of dissolution (Tähtinen et al., 2007: 1280). Purinton et al. (2007: 76) discussed how to manage business relationships with the purpose of achieving relationship survival. Ritter and Geersbro (2011: 988) defined relationship termination as an organizational competence and pointed out the importance of relationship dissolution management.

5.1. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Purinton et al. (2007: 77) provided an analysis of conflict response behaviours since they affect the future of the partnership. Partners' visible behaviours in the time of conflict is a determinant of partners' intention to exit, perception of relationship's value, in the end predicting survival, quality of survival and dissolution. The Partnership Survival Framework (PSF) is presented by their research to ease the management of relationship and to make managers more proactive. Purinton et al. (2007: 86) convey that applying different conflict response behaviours will lead to different results. Based on prior research, Purinton et al. (2007: 77) integrated arrangement of Conflict Response Behaviours of Thomas' (1976), and Rusbult et al.'s (1982) Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect (EVLN) Model. The behaviours of the partner, the feelings of the partner, thought of relationship's future are

observable by using this framework. These patterns will then determine the final result, which is survival or dissolution. Within Thomas' (1990) conflict response behaviours; avoiding, competing, accomodating, compromising and collaborating, only the effect of competing and collaborating is proven in Purinton et al.'s (2007: 96) research. According to their research, compromising and collaborating provided nearly the same result, so compromising was deleted from the framework. Collaborating is proved to have a strong forecasting ability that finds exclusive solution to conflict rather than familiar ideas, and strengthens the relationship quality. Competing also found support to forecast exit, leading to dissolution because of not paying attention to partners' worries as Purinton et al (2007: 96) suggested. Aggressive behaviours like competing are proved to damage the partnership and are recommended not to be preferred if parties want to continue the business relationship.

Freeman and Browne (2004) also discussed conflict management styles in the dissolution process including the choice of competing and accomodating approaches. Freeman and Browne's (2004: 177) competing approaches are high in assertiveness which consist of the power usage to reach its objectives without considering partner's well-being in the dissolution process. Accomodating approaches are high in cooperation, considering other party's needs and wants rather than its own during the dissolution process as the authors identify Freeman and Browne's (2004: 177). The collaborative style is high on both assertiveness and cooperation which tries to find a common solution that satisfies both parties by discussing accurately all the issues and concerns. The avoiding style is low in both assertiveness and cooperation, escapes from the issues and discussions. Freeman and Browne (2004: 177), describe cooperative style as low on assertiveness and high on cooperation, which is also other-oriented by providing a collaborative solution to the issues and pay attention to other party's needs and wants. The assertive style is low in cooperation and high in assertiveness, and adopts a direct and self-oriented strategy by not considering the other party's well-being. The compromise is a midpoint style of competing versus accommodating approach. The choice of these styles is identified as a function of the specific situation, one's basic orientation or behavioral disposition towards conflict. These items include national culture of the partners. So, diverse cultures have an

impact on conflict management styles and communication strategies during the dissolution process as they asserted. Freeman and Browne's (2004: 177) study provided an example; China is culturally distant from the US, Australian, Canadian countries, and has more complex management than Western context. Even the desired style is high in collaboration and low in assertiveness, the business relationships between Asian and Western companies are found to adopt a cooperative style by the authors. Freeman and Browne (2004:177) claim that the accomodating approach in the dissolution process leads probably to the most beautiful exit.

5.2. ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP TERMINATION COMPETENCE

Ritter and Geersbro (2011) acknowledge that relationship termination is an organizational competence; that is the ability of quitting from unwanted relationship with organizational capabilities of a firm, is not studied well. Ritter and Geersbro (2011) define organizational relationship termination competence as routines of processes and systems to promote intentional behaviours to end business relationships and imply it is a new concept. Organizational relationship competence is found to include four dimensions which are top management's acceptance of termination, the definition of unwanted customers, processes and systems for terminating a relationship, and employee motivation to terminate. Termination acceptance shows managers that, terminating a relationship is a legitimate decision and provides courage to end unwanted customer relationships which are unprofitable and problematic. The authors define unwanted customer relationships as unsuccessful relationships with respect to offering a value to the firm. Unwanted customer relationships are required to be either developed or ended. The definition of unwanted customers as a dimension of termination competence refers to the knowledge of the firm's personnel about features of unwanted customers and by having a clear definition, profitable relationship termination will be prevented and unprofitable ones will be provided accordingly. Termination routine is another dimension proposed by the authors which consists of processes and systems and used by the personnel in an organization once a relationship will be terminated, and shows all information of the organization about terminating a relationship. According to the

authors, having a routine process enable employees to end unwanted relationships easily and helps to reduce the percentage of unwanted relationships in the firm's customer portfolio. The last dimension, termination incentives; which motivate employees who intend to end relationship termination when required, and promoting termination will increase the number of termination decision and will reduce the number of unwanted relationships. Also, antecedent conditions of termination competence are found to be profitability focus and termination constraints by the authors. Terminating burden relationships will increase the profitability of the firm. According to authors, external termination constraints such as long-term contracts, strong third party demands, fear to appear unethical may affect this competence negatively.

5.3. RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

5.3.1. Exit Management, Defection Strategies and Customer Recovery Management

Pick's (2010) research discusses exit management, defection strategies and customer recovery management. Exit management is about deciding which communication strategies of relationship dissolution to use. In supplier-initiated endings, firms are leaving their ex-customers. So, exit management is a strategy viable for suppliers' decision of ending business relationships. Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000) point out that both deteriorating and developing relationships should be managed effectively. Giller and Matear (2001) assert that adopting other-oriented strategies will be probably result in a better termination, compared to the termination with the use of self-oriented strategies.

When the termination/switching is initiated by the customer, defection strategies are used by customers to leave suppliers. Customer recovery management is performed when left supplier firms intend to reactivate the relationship and win back their old partner. It is noted by Pick (2010) that firms must be sure that the old relationship worths saving. Customer recovery management is conceptualized by the

author based on the general approach by Stauss and Friege (1999) consisting of five stages: (a) definition of recovery objectives, (b) analysis of defection, (c) win-back activities, (d) controlling of win-back means and processes, and (e) subsequent management functions (Pick, 2010: 100). It is possible to win the customer back and reactivate the relationship, if only there remains social, financial and structural bonds between partners. The relationship energy concept of Havila and Wilkinson (2002) is related with the customer recovery management.

5.3.2. Communication Strategies in Relationship Dissolution

Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1272) defines “beautiful exit” strategy as adoption of strategy that harms the initiator, the other party and connected network in a minimum level. None of the communication strategies can be labelled as the most beautiful exit. As the relationship is affected from several factors, dissolution of relationship is affected too. So, managers have to act carefully to attain beautiful exit in multi-dimensional factor including, complex relationships. There are negative consequences of relationship dissolution for both parties. The disengager is exposed to switching or break-up costs as well as emotional damages when dissolving a relationship. Proper management of dissolution leads to decreased costs and damages for both parties and form a basis of reactivating the relationship in the future. If disengager cannot manage the dissolution properly, the reputation of the disengager may be damaged. So, the disengager should understand the process of dissolution and take effects of dissolution into consideration when selecting the dissolution communication strategies. Moreover, if the other party wants to continue the relationship, understanding communication strategies of the disengager may act like a warning signal to take required actions in order to preserve the relationship.

In all cases of Giller and Matear's (2001: 106) research, direct termination strategies were adopted, which means the disengager firm expressed the intent to leave the relationship accurately. Giller and Matear (2001: 108) assert that adopting other-oriented strategies will probably result in a better termination, compared to the termination with the use of self-oriented strategies. Firms using an other-oriented strategy may have to give up some self-interests and this constitute an only negative

impact of them. It seems that firms utilize several strategies at the same time and do not intentionally choose them to take advantage against other party. Instead, authors point out that strategies emerge as termination advances, so firms behave accordingly and not consciously adopt a strategy.

Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000) proposes a model including communication strategies in relationship dissolution. Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila's (1997) model of dissolution is adopted which includes intrapersonal, intracompany, dyadic, aftermath and network stages (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1273). The model is also generated by the ideas of Duck (1982), Dwyer et al. (1987), and Ping and Dwyer (1992), and includes the effect of voice strategy of Hirschman (1975) to the dissolution process. Communication strategies are used in the dyadic phase of the dissolution process (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000; Giller and Matear, 2001). According to Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1274), the communication strategy decision is made based on relationship characteristics such as trust, social bonds in a relationship and reasons of dissolution. Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1274) identify four different exit strategies based on Hirschman's "exit and voice" suggestion with Baxter's (1985) research, a typology of dissolution communication strategies based on directness and orientation (see Table 6). Directness is composed of two strategies, which are indirect (disguised and silent exit), and direct (communicated and revocable exit). Orientation includes two strategies: other-oriented communication and self-oriented communication.

Table 6. Communication Strategies in Relationship Dissolution

Directness		Orientation	
		Other-oriented	Self-oriented
Indirect communication	Disguised exit	Pseudo-de-escalation	Cost escalation
	Silent exit	Fading away	Withdrawal
Direct communication	Communicated exit	Negotiated farewell	Fait accompli
	Revocable exit	Mutual state-of-the-relationship-talk	Diverging state-of-the-relationship-talk

Adapted from Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1274)

Self-orientation means thinking of self-interest rather than other party while other orientation means caring about other party and dissolve a relationship without damaging it (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1274). When the disengager makes effort to

withdraw from the relationship without conveying accurately “I want to quit”, this is an indirect communication strategy. Indirect communication is grouped into two which are disguised exit or silent exit. Disguised exit is obvious when the disengager hides the real message by using different words or behaviours. Pseudo-de-escalation strategy is used when the disengager is not satisfied with the current relationship; wants to change it and conveys his/her wish to the partner. The idea behind this strategy is to exit from relationship slowly, first by reducing the dependency and not revealing the real intent and still keeping the relationship alive. This is other-oriented strategy. Cost escalation is another disguised strategy with self-orientation. The disengager tries to make the partner itself decide to exit from the relationship by increasing costs step by step until partner objects to it. Silent exit strategy exists when there is no need to communicate that relationship is over, both parties understand and not want to save the relationship that is dissolved. This strategy is known as fading away and it is other-oriented since it is used to save partner's face which means showing respect to old partner and avoiding from hurting it. Withdrawal is a self-oriented strategy in which disengager gives signal of exit by behaving differently (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1275), for example; not being honest and open (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 573).

In direct communication, there is no doubt that disengager wants to exit from the relationship (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1275). Direct communication is grouped into two which are communicated or revocable exit. Self-oriented strategy of direct communication is termed as *fait accompli*, that is expressing accurately to the partner that relationship is dissolved and not give a word to the partner to restore it. Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1275) point out that if partner succeeds to talk about this situation, conflict is likely to arise about whose fault it is (termed also attributional conflict). Negotiated farewell is other-oriented direct communication strategy in which partners can discuss the dissolution without having a conflict. Behind this strategy lies an idea that conflict is inevitable between parties in a relationship and parties can solve it by discussing.

Alajoutsijärvi et al. (2000: 1275) mention that in revocable exit, adopting other-oriented strategy, the disengager interpret the intent of exit from the relationship accurately and volunteer to discuss the problems and reasons of

dissolution intention (termed as mutual state-of-the-relationship talk). There is a chance to restore the relationship if necessary steps are taken. Diverging state-of-the-relationship talk is a self-oriented strategy, in which salvation of relationship is only possible if one partner changes his/her mind and decrease self-oriented behavior.

It is evident that more than one strategy can be used together or the strategy can be changed according to other actor's behaviours (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1280). In the same process, there are several actors engaged in a relationship dissolution from both sides, and they all use different communication strategies. That means, interpersonal disagreement affects negatively the dissolution process. Moreover, indirect strategies are more effective than direct strategies. Indirect strategies represent a notice of information that show the relationship is in danger of dissolution. There is a way of saving the relationship, by understanding the signal of danger and commence restoration process which are discussed in the dissolution process section.

According to Pressey and Mathews (2003: 131), it is clear that each type of dissolution category have certain communication strategies. For each dissolution type, a wide range of different communication strategies were employed. A dissolution categorization provided by Pressey and Mathews (2003: 133) include bilateral dissolution, customer-de-selection, supplier-de-selection and fading away of relations. Direct communication strategies are adopted in bilateral endings, whereas the firms that bilaterally ended the relationship pointed out that, in spite of good relations with the partner, both parties agreed to end the relationship. However, it is a revocable decision. Since parties decide to end the relationship mutually, the communication is amicable. State of-the-relationship-talk and negotiated farewell as communication strategies belong to this category. As it is stated in their research, buyer's decision to end the relationship which is called supplier-de-selection is the most common category of dissolution. It is irrevocable many times because interpersonal incompatibility results in lack of discussion to repair the relationship. In general, indirect communication strategies were assumed. Pseudo-de-escalation or withdrawal is used as tactical dissolution strategies to state the dissatisfaction of the relationship and intent to change it. Also, grave dressing was used together with the real reasons of dissolution in order to save face. When the communication is direct,

the disengager used *fait accompli* and attributional conflict which results in irrevocable conditions and hostilities. The main reason of customer-de-selection is unprofitability of the customer. Customers become burdens to sellers, so economic factors affecting customers are a motivator for ending the relationship for suppliers. Moreover, due to competition, other buyers may offer better prices to suppliers. Negotiated farewell may be used when deciding to switch the unprofitable relationship with a profitable customer. In category three, direct communication was adopted such as blaming the other party (*fait accompli*), and grave dressing like category two. In the last category; fade away relationships, there were not much example from Pressey and Mathews' (2003: 139) interviews. Only one respondent of the study admitted that their party did not want to continue the relationship due to unprofitability but did nothing about it, left it to the time by ignoring. It is also revocable since there is no conflict that results in dissolution of the relationship. The communication may be said to be amicable, there were no disagreement and bad relations, in fact there was no communication at all according to the authors. Bilateral or mutual dissolution is said to be the most preferable type of dissolution by management.

5.3.2.1. Factors that Affect Dissolution Strategy

Freeman and Browne, (2004) proposed a theoretical model of the influence of national culture on dissolution communication strategies in Western versus Asian business relationships. They argue that culture is the independent variable and the dissolution communication strategy is the dependent variable. The dependent variable; dissolution communication strategy in the model is defined by Baxter (1985). Also, Hofstede's (1980) study of business culture is used in the model. Cultural values consisted of five cultural dimensions; power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, collectivism vs. individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long vs. short-term orientation. Freeman and Browne (2004: 176) claim that dissolution communication strategy of the other party is perceived differently by other party depending on its culture and vice versa. So, the filter of culture provides an impact on dissolution outcome.

Giller and Matear (2001: 101) also discussed the effect of closeness, tight social bonds and degree of experience in dissolution on dissolution strategies. A relationship which is characterized by strong social bonds will be ended using other-oriented strategy. They also found that closer relationships probably lead to more usage of other-oriented strategies, as both parties will care about each others' "losing face" while ending the relationship. It limits both parties' choice of strategy. Moreover, firms having close relationship will feel an obligation to convey directly the dissolution intent to their partner. Authors explain that this situation may be due to disengager firm's fear of resulting in bad image among its business network. The amount of investment in a relationship also determines the choice of strategy of both parties. They gave an example; high investment in a relationship leads to adoption of self-oriented strategies because both parties try to decrease the costs of dissolution. Furthermore, Giller and Matear (2001: 105) support the proposition that when the degree of experience of relationship dissolution of the disengager is high, the management of dissolution is better and perception of the process for both parties is positive. Gaining dissolution management experience with the knowledge of dissolution process enable managers to learn which strategy to use to dissolve relationships satisfactory and help to decrease the set of strategy choices. Cultural diversity also constitutes a danger for relationship formation and development (Vaaland et al., 2004: 14). Being aware of it enables managers to avoid forming unmanageable business relationships at the start of it as the authors describe (Vaaland et al., 2004: 15). Also, awareness of it brings an advantage of paying attention to cultural differences and helps to decrease them as they imply.

CHAPTER 6

CONSEQUENCES OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

Giller and Matear (2001) convey it should be noted that the real consequences of dissolution are hard to identify instantly after the dissolution, time is required to pass to detect all of the effects. Kang et al. (2012) offered and supported two relationship dissolution consequences which are growing opportunism and dropped cooperation. Having a dissolution intention will make actors look for another partner and behave according to self-interest; resulting in opportunistic behaviours, not thinking of the well-being of ex-partner. After opportunism has increased, the buyer's dependence on seller decreases and there is no more need to cooperate with the seller. As Giller and Matear (2001) state, different reasons lead to different consequences for both parties and the connected network. Pick (2010) discussed consequences into two distinct groups which are positive and negative consequences.

6.1. POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES

Relationship dissolution is not always a negative event, since the resources and investments may be transferred to future customers of the firm (Pick, 2010). Moreover, the lost relationship may be reactivated in the future as the “relationship energy” (Havila and Wilkinson, 2002: 191) exists after the dissolution and partners may be willing to return as Pick (2010) stated. So, according to Pick (2010: 99), firms should “never say never” to future reactivation of relationships. Besides, the relationship termination may provide firm a fruitful learning experience for a company as Tähtinen (2002: 350) mention. So, it provides a chance to improve firm's performance.

6.2. NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

Pick (2010) state that negative consequences are more commonly seen. The direct consequence will be a loss of sales if the lost customer was used to be profitable. Moreover, to compensate the decrease of sales, new customers will be

searched or the old customers will be won-back; which means additional set up costs or win-back costs will be incurred. Also, there may be additional costs for the initiator party. If initiator adopts a self-oriented strategy, its reputation and image may be damaged. Furthermore, employees may be affected emotionally from the dissolution and this may lead a decrease in their performances.



CHAPTER 7

METHODOLOGY

As buyer-seller relationship dissolution has not been studied much, an exploratory research is conducted by the author. The qualitative method is employed to collect data. Qualitative method has a probability of constructing new theoretical insights since it reveals to the researcher interesting and unexplored results (Tidström and Ahman, 2006: 284). Face-to-face structured interviews are conducted with exporter firms about their customer relationship dissolution. Information about the firm, relationship before dissolution, the dissolution process, reasons of dissolution and consequences of dissolution were asked to the respondents. As Pressey and Mathews (2003: 140) implied, interviews permit respondents to explain their experiences deeply and use their own words when conveying what happened.

7.1. SAMPLING

The sample of the research was exporter firms in İzmir, Turkey who had experienced relationship dissolution with their importers. The author had gathered a list from İzmir Chamber of Commerce, the institution that is giving service for exporters. The list was about Turkey's first 1,000 exporters according to export figures of 2014. The 55 of the firms are located in İzmir out of 1,000. The author selected firms in İzmir from the list as a sample. Then, the author selected firms based on having acquaintance there and the volunteer basis in order to increase the chance of acceptance of firms and decrease searching time. Firms were contacted first by telephone and asked if they had ever experienced a relationship dissolution and wanted to share information with the author. Also, it was stated that the names of the respondents and firms were under the seal of secrecy. Some of the respondents were found with this method.

Some firms that was called rejected to share confidential information or stated that they did not have experienced relationship dissolution or asked to respond with an e-mail to the questions but they didn't respond (55 firms in total). After contacting with several firms, the author started to seek for other firms as the number of the

interviews were very few. So, sample was determined again by the convenience sampling as firms were selected based on proximity due to limited time to complete interviews. The list of firms that operate in İzmir Atatürk Organized Industrial Zone was gathered from organization's website. The majority of the respondent firms' work places were in İzmir Atatürk Organized Industrial Zone and interviews were conducted there mostly. After conducting interviews with volunteer firms, the author continued to call firms from the list if the last respondent provided new information. Interviews were carried on until respondents did not convey anything new about the topic, which meant when saturation was reached (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In total eighteen interviews were conducted. Two of them dropped from the sample since one of the respondents did not know much about the dissolved relationships and one of the respondents did not have experienced a relationship dissolution actually. Data included sixteen firms from variety of industries; packaging industry, ceramic industry, food industry, infrastructure pipes and parts industry, PVC profile industry, equipment for poultry industry, connection equipment industry, textile industry, automotive parts and refrigeration systems industry. The author tried to include firms from variety of industries to increase representativeness of the sample.

7.2. DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected with face-to-face semi-structured interviews, conducted by the author. Interview format was structured because asking the same questions provide quality of data (Friend et al., 2013: 1126). Besides, structured interview format ensured that all the relevant information about the characteristics of relationship before dissolution, reasons of it, the process and the consequences of dissolution were gathered by the author. Semi-structured interviews were conducted as each relationship is unique. The respondents were asked to explain the details of relationship dissolution by directive questions of the author. Some prompting questions such as "Why?", "How?", "Can you explain the details?" to analyze the situation deeply was also asked. Furthermore, as Friend et al. (2013: 1126) state, personal interviews assure that complex topics are analyzed well.

Questions of the interview were prepared based on prior research. The questions were comprised of four parts: First, dissolved relationships' characteristics before it was dissolved was asked. This part was extracted from Giller and Matear's (2001) information needs document. These included the level of trust, commitment, dependency, communication level, level of investment in a relationship and existence of social bonds. Second, respondents were simply asked "What happened?", "Why the relationship was dissolved?" in order to understand the reasons of relationship dissolution. Third, respondents were asked to explain the dissolution process. Within the process, respondents were asked if they had unwanted customers. This question was extracted from Ritter and Geersbro (2011). In the last part, the respondents were asked what they did after dissolution, how they compensated the effects of losing that customer. Also, respondents were asked questions about the effects of relationship dissolution on their firm, one of Giller and Matear's (2001) question. Some additional questions such as "Why?", "How?", "Can you explain the details?" to analyze the situation deeply was also asked in every parts of the interview.

All interviews (thirteen) but three were tape recorded, since three of the respondents did not want to share the information if it is recorded. The author took notes in three interviews. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes approximately. In total, 67 exporter-importer relationship dissolutions were recorded from sixteen exporter firms. Approximately, every respondent talked about four relationships.

7.3. DATA ANALYSIS

After all the interviews were conducted, the author transcribed the audible data that took 88 pages and approximately six hours for each interview. Then, the data were coded according to thematic analysis. The data were categorized into themes to display similar patterns in interviews for each section of the interview. As Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) state: "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." As the authors explain, this method provides richness of data since it defines and plans the basics of data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 83), this method is very convenient for exploring an area that is not studied well or the respondents' perspectives are not

known. The authors declare that the researcher requires intuition to identify themes as it is hard to identify them from entire data. So, both realities and the covered information are revealed with the use of thematic analysis. The data were read several times to identify themes. Then, content analysis was conducted to present findings in a proper manner. Tables were prepared displaying the numbers of relationships in each category of findings.

The information about characteristics of the relationship before dissolution, unwanted customer existence in firms' portfolios, reasons of dissolution, the process of dissolution and consequences of dissolution were obtained with the help of interview questions. Relationship dissolution categorizations according to initiator party were explored by asking respondents these kind of questions: "Who ended the relationship?", "So, both of you came to a mutual agreement?" while they were explaining the process. Relationship dissolution categorizations according to types of business relationships and their endings and according to intensity were analyzed by the deduction, there were no questions about them. For all dissolution categorizations, tables were prepared showing the number of relationships that belong to each category. After analyzing interviews, the existence of influencing factors of dissolution such as precipitating events, predisposing factors, and deterrents of dissolution were deduced by the author from the events. Dissolution management strategies were also analyzed by the author within the dissolution process explanations of respondents. Dissolution communication strategies used in the process were also deduced from the respondents' explanation of dissolution process and table was prepared accordingly.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Author of the research presents findings of interviews in six sections. First section discusses the exporter-importer relationship before dissolution. In this section; trust, commitment, communication levels, existence of social bonds, investment level in a relationship and dependency level of parties existing in a relationship before the dissolution is analyzed. In the second section, relationship dissolution categorizations according to initiator party and according to intensity, according to types of business relationships and their endings are presented. Third section discusses the influencing factors and events such as predisposing factors, precipitating events, deterrents of dissolution and categorization of reasons of dissolution. Besides, in the fourth section relationship dissolution process is explained. Then in the fifth section, relationship dissolution as marketing relationship management and communication strategies in relationship dissolution is debated. The sixth section gives information about positive and negative consequences of relationship dissolution.

8.1. EXPORTER-IMPORTER RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS BEFORE DISSOLUTION

The question about the nature of relationship before dissolution including trust, commitment, social bonds, dependency, investment in a relationship and communication was not answered by every respondent. The reason of this, may be respondents rushing to answer reasons of the dissolution to reveal that it was not their fault. Also, some of the respondents were reluctant to give some information. Tähtinen and Havila, (2004: 921) explains this situation as stating that there are difficulties of obtaining information from firms about relationship dissolution, since they think it is private and delicate information. Also, firms tend to see that relationship dissolution as their failure as the authors stress. Findings reveal that before the relationship is dissolved; trust and dependency levels might be low or

high. Also, investment in a relationship might be low or high, which is dependent on the industry characteristics of the businesses perform in.

Respondents declared that mutual and high trust existed between parties before the relationship was dissolved (eight relationships). Trust was developed by the intermediary/customer visits to seller's factory and firm. One manager observed: "The customers that we newly contacted come to see our firm and factory for the confirmation of trust. When they come, they are impressed from our factory and warehouse, so we reap the benefit of it." Besides, mode of payment in the relationship agreement shows the trust level in a relationship for example; cash basis is preferred mostly by sellers to guarantee the payment, especially in the first order. Also, letter of credit is adopted by sellers to use bank guarantee in case customers fail to pay. In one manager's words: "It is absolute that mode of payments are indicators of our trust to our customer and the time that passed (implying relationship duration). At first, we start the relationship with letter of credit and after some time, we work with current account or cash against goods." These words also support following finding which is as relationship duration increases, trust level also increases between parties. However, one respondent declares that it is not compulsory to have a bank guarantee. In the words of one manager interviewed:

Especially, we can convey that it was a totally trust relationship. Under normal circumstances, we do not sell without guaranteeing ourselves, you should have heard about Eximbank. Potential customer should have a limit from Eximbank in order to work with deferred payment. Because we can get our payment from Eximbank when the customer is not able to pay. However, even this customer does not have a limit, we have worked with deferred payment due to having good relations with our managers and existing trust between them.

At the start of the relationship, trust level was reported to be low among parties (six relationships) by respondents due to political risks in country. Project-based industries such as automotive parts, equipment for poultry, infrastructure systems and infrastructure industries do not allow to build long-term trust relationships since they are episodic relationships. Especially in construction industry, infrastructure industry, equipment for poultry industry, connection equipment industry, automotive parts industry and ceramic industry, trust in relationship was low but developed in time with the repeat purchases based on proper payment of debts. One respondent from infrastructure industry which performs project-based sales claimed:

Yes, we do not trust on them, because circumstances are obvious. When we sent a product to foreign market, at least ten truck is used with total amount of \$ 200,000. How can I track this payment? You know that the circumstances in Libya is changing frequently, one day a government rules and the next day, a civil riot overthrow the government.

Another respondent verified this with these words: “The time we start to work with a partner, we prefer cash basis payment due to nonexistence of trust. After one or two years, we can offer 30 days, 45 days, 60 days or even 90 days deferred payment to some of customers.”

Dependency and investment level in a relationship before dissolution are related. Investment in a relationship is performed to create mutual dependency between parties (four relationships). In general, high dependency existed between parties before dissolution was realized according to respondents (three relationships). Especially in automotive parts industry, customer’s production is dependent on seller’s products. So, customer counts on seller to transport products as soon as possible. One manager claims: “There exists a mutual dependency, we arrange airway transportation even two days’ production delay is realized. Sometimes we transport the delivery with two drivers at the fastest way possible.” The same manager continues to explain: “An auto manufacturer decided to cease production of one automobile model in the past. If the automotive firm had been late to inform us about this situation, it would have to purchase old remaining orders of automotive parts.” So, mutual dependency existed between them. Following words of one manager who operates in clothing industry also show the dependency level between parties: “Customers made me buy fabrics more than required in the current order. When I replied that the fabric amount was too much to use in current order of production, they assured me to give further order in the future.” This example also shows that seller makes an investment in a relationship to build a long-term relationship. However, one respondent from vegetable oil industry claimed that they did have any dependency and investment in their dissolved relationships. The words of respondents: “No, as our product is standard, there is no mutual dependency between us, no responsibilities exist at all.” Another point is, in foreign countries, “agreements must be kept” principle is not applicable in business relationships. In Turkey, parties keep one’s word and try to comply rules of agreements and do not end the relationships easily. As one employer declared: “There exists this principle in

domestic markets in Turkey, parties give importance to comply with agreements. However, in Europe, it is price that matters more than this principle.” Furthermore, investment in a relationship was also said to be high in general by respondents. For example, in food packaging industry one manager noted:

A separate special equipment in production for each customer is used which totals high amounts. For every design separate cylinder should be utilized which totals € 4,500. It is a one-off payment, in repeat purchases, same cylinder is used. Sometimes we get the payment from customer only if we can persuade. In this situation, customer makes investment in this firm and continues to purchase from us as they cannot stand to switch to another seller.

Commitment might also be high or low as the interviews claimed (high in two relationships, low in one relationship). A respondent from ceramic industry conveyed that mutual commitment existed between their customers and firm:

We offer to customer to become our intermediary in that country. Ask it to buy all products needed from our firm, and we assure them to supply all necessary products and hold stock for them. In this sector, supplying an endless stock is very crucial. In return, they only buy from our firm and distribute our products at that country. We do not launch any store or intermediary in that country. So, this customer becomes our intermediary.

An example of low commitment is again from vegetable oil industry since customers can give up purchasing from seller. Words of a respondent: “Sometimes a customer is only price-oriented. The price is acceptable when the agreement is signed and relationship continues for a while. Whenever customer gets a better offer or better price, switches to alternative supplier and ends the relationship with you.”

Social bonds were said to be tight between parties before the relationship was dissolved (six relationships). Personal/working relations were kept good by customer visits of sales department employees. For example, one respondent noted: “In trade fairs we meet up with existing customers, it helps to keep the relationship warm. We try to travel very often to communicate with them.” Also, with the technology, it becomes easier to communicate with the customer. For example, one export specialist claimed:

With the developed technology, it is very common to use communication applications for mobile phones such as WhatsApp, Viber to communicate with business partners. I do not recognize a customer without having a WhatsApp application. Sometimes, I only write “Hi!” to them, sometimes I send landscape pictures of Turkey to invite them to see Turkey’s beauties. In this respect, social bonds are kept tight.

Another finding from interviews is that only strong personal relations are not enough to build a successful relationship. Following words of one manager:

Informal relationship is formed by sales and marketing employees at the start of the relationship. Business relationship goes together with friendship aspect until the project is assured to be certain. Then, the relationship becomes formal, the delivery is realized if only customer fulfills its obligations to provide required documents of trade written in agreement.

Communication between parties were reported to be generally strong (six relationships), also a synergy was reported to exist between firms before the relationship was dissolved. One respondent also pointed out the importance of amicable communication between parties. After the dissolution of the relationship, seller reactivated the old relationship with a new product thanks to amicable communication. Another finding from the interviews is about the importance of communication in the relationship. As one informant noted: “You have to communicate with the customer at all times. You have to keep asking if they have need anything all the time. If you do not, customer does not care about you. So, it becomes a relationship based on a self-interest.”

Findings support that the characteristics of the relationship such as high commitment level, high trust level, high dependency level, existence of social bonds or high communication do not have an impact on prevention of dissolution. If there are external reasons and buyer/seller-related reasons, then the relationship dissolves.

8.2. RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION CATEGORIZATIONS

8.2.1. Relationship Dissolution Categorization According to Initiator Party

First, Holmlund and Hobbs’ (2009) categorization of relationship dissolution will be analyzed (see Table 7). 28 out of 67 relationships, that mean the majority of the relationships were dissolved by bilateral ending (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009). In bilateral ending, none of the parties want the relationship to dissolve, but the external environment and competitors force them to do so. Mostly, political factors such as war, terror, political instability led to dissolution of relationships as respondents reported. One respondent said following words: “The reason was war, border gate

was closed. They wanted to order again with cash basis however it was not possible to bring money due to closed borders (in Syria).” Economic factors such as economic crisis also have an important effect on bilateral endings of relationships. Following words of one manager: “One of our three to four years’ intermediary’s financial situation worsened and their purchases declined by fifty percent immediately. Do we continue? Yes, but the sales volume decreased abruptly.” Another example of bilateral ending due to economic factors is from industry, as respondents declared: “The economic crisis in Greece where the largest market of our firm and best customers are located in, affected us badly. For six months’ time, we were unable to deliver even one box of products. Their banks were closed and accounts were frozen.”

Table 7. Relationship Dissolution Categorization According to Initiator Party

Type of Ending	Number of relationships
Buyer-initiated ending	23
Seller-initiated ending	16
Bilateral ending	28

Second most declared type of ending according to initiator party was buyer-initiated ending (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), which is composed of 23 relationship endings. In this type, seller had a fault in general and after the relationship completed, buyer did not buy again from the seller due to dissatisfaction. One respondent said following words: “Customer said that they had given us a list of rules before the relationship was formed. Every mistake makes us to pay predetermined penalty. When we made one of the mistake on the list, they said that we had accepted to pay penalty to them, now pay. We objected to this claim and they said that they had ceased to work with us.” Another example of buyer-initiated ending is from clothing industry, where export manager conveyed that: “Our production molds for women’s shirt did not fit the way they asked for. We agreed on men’s shirt however, women’s shirt is not like what they wanted. So, thinking of giving both shirts to one seller, they ended the relationship and switched to another seller.” Moreover, competitor actions may affect the relationship. As one manager observed: “Trust in our relationships are always high, the customers are actually have

been worked for years. As I said, some customers remain silent meantime, we do not work for a year and they switch to another supplier, then we start to work again.”

The third most referred type of dissolution is seller-initiated ending (Holmlund and Hobbs, 2009), which consists of sixteen relationship endings. In this type, customer has faults to lead dissolution, external environment affects the relationship or a disagreement of parties exists in a relationship. As one manager informed that: “A customer asked me to pay fifty percent of the payment when the product is delivered first to Istanbul. Then, customer asked me to deliver products to Slovenia and to pay remaining amount afterwards. I did not accept that offer, I demanded a cash basis. I said that if they did not pay cash, they should not buy from me.” Economic and political factors also had a role in this type of dissolution. For example, an export manager declared: “We started to work with Algeria recently however, now it is an incredibly political risk holding country...We would work with them as an intermediary in that country, but now there is no sense of our presence in that country anymore. So I cancelled it at the beginning of our relationship due to political risks.” Next example is declared as:

In Iraq, quality certification document is requested from Turkish exporters whereas European exporters are not obliged to. Automatically we had to compete in the market and due to decreased profitability, we decided to ignore these markets conveying that there is no sense of our presence as we became unable to compete in the market due to increased costs.

One respondent justified economic factors’ role in this type of dissolution with these words:

Everything is up to decrease in profitability. In Azerbaijan, devaluation, a money crisis was realized and customer’s purchase decreased incredibly. So, we have decreased the budget that we spend to this market and have started to offer discounted prices to other markets. Automatically we have ceased to sell with the same prices at that market.

8.2.2. Categorization of Relationship Dissolution According to Intensity

Pressey and Selassie’s (2007) relationship dissolution categorization according to intensity consists of complete, partial and temporary dissolution. Results showed that 42 relationships were dissolved completely (Pressey and Selassie, 2007), which means both parties or disengager cut off all the relationships between parties. For example, one export manager asserted that: “I had a customer

from Bulgaria once, we sold wet towel packaging to them. However, we learnt that this customer had no permission to launch a factory and failed to launch the firm. So, we had sold products once and had to cease working with them.” Another example of complete ending from automotive parts industry: “Our customer from Serbia asked us to postpone the payment for fifteen days, we accepted it but they did not pay. So, we warned them that we may apply to Eximbank to get our payment. They still did not pay and we applied to Eximbank. That is why we ceased to work with them, customer could not pay due to economic factors.” Besides, one manager observed: “We started to decrease our risk by decreasing the volume of product sold to Belarus, expressing customer that we do not have enough product stock. After some time, € 10,000 risk of this customer remained and we told customer that we want to quit from this risky market.” Also one textile manager noted that: “One customer asked me to produce very detailed shirts; collar, yoke with different color, also order volume was very low. Ten shirts from every model, in total 500 shirts were requested, however I did not want to accept this job, it was profitable but I am not a tailor.”

Partial dissolution (Pressey and Selassie, 2007) in findings was seen in eight relationships. It is seen in business relationships that have more than one business connections, like temporary dissolution it is not a complete dissolution of business ties. As one manager in PVC profile industry stated: “Some PVC profile accessories that we exported by shipping became mouldy once and we decided not to sell these products to geographically distant countries. We thought that in case we get customer complaints from moulded products, we direct these customers to get those products from domestic market and nearby markets.” It is obvious that these parties had more than one relationship and seller ended only one business connection. Another example is from connection equipment industry: “We have a customer from Uzbekistan in automotive industry which has worked for two years. Climate affects us, in winter we do not travel much and visit the customer. Also customer makes seasonal purchases, the job gets slower and comes to a stopping point in winter.” As it is stated, in summer purchases increase and relationship continues.

Temporary dissolution (Pressey and Selassie, 2007) was seen in eighteen relationships. In general, due to political and economic factors, disengager party

decreases the volume of purchasing, there is no exact dissolution since disengager thinks to improve the relationship after negative event gets better. One manager noted that: “It is not a terminated job, it is only postponed for a while due to customer’s country’s financial profile. If parties do not come across with a serious problem about debt/credit relationship, parties do not kill each other.” It is obvious that links are preserved and the relationship continues afterwards. Another example, one export manager claimed:

You do not apply for Eximbank and behave flexible as you know that the situation of customer in Greece is quite different. The customer did not have a fault and he had a goodwill, it was crisis in the country that prevented customer’s payment. We even skipped the application process to Eximbank to continue the relationship, assuming that it was a temporary situation.

8.2.3. Categorization According to Types of Business Relationships and Their Endings

Interviews were also analyzed according to Tähtinen et al’s. (2007) categorization of relationship and dissolution types (see Table 8). As the respondents noted, the most common relationship type and type of dissolution is continuous relationship with forced dissolution (Tähtinen et al. 2007) which is seen in 34 relationships from the interviews. Competition is noted to be one of the leading reasons of forced ending. As one informant from refrigeration industry explained:

The gas we used in our product is now under a ban in Europe. As our products work with that old-fashioned gas, there is no sense of being in that market automatically. Even we attempt to invent new product to serve Europe, the costs will be high since in Turkey there is not sufficient demand for this product. We will not be able to compete in the market due to the higher price of the product.

Table 8. Categorization According to Types of Business Relationships and Their Endings

Type of Relationship	Type of Ending	Number of Relationships
Continuous	Chosen	19
Continuous	Forced	34
Continuous	Natural	4
Terminal	Desired	-
Episodic	Predetermined	7
Episodic	Chosen	1
Episodic	Forced	2

Another example of this type was explained by a respondent: “We are a medium-sized firm and we have a certain amount of costs, so we can no longer offer prices under our costs. There is no sense of sacrificing from our interests to keep customers.” External reasons are said to be leading continuous relationships to dissolve. As one manager observed: “We compulsorily ended the relationship with the Greek customer in 2013. It is a good decision because this year that customer cannot pay more than 400 Euro in a week to its foreign suppliers. So, it was a well-timed action.”

The second common type is continuous relationship with chosen ending (Tähtinen et al. 2007) according to informants, with nineteen relationships noted. In this type, one party decides to end the relationship due to several factors and reasons, varies from external to firm-related reasons. One manager observed: “Customer asked us to pay compensation due to our fault in production, we said that we would pay if the second fault was realized. They declined this claim and said that now that you did not pay compensation, we would not work with you anymore.” Next example from a respondent: “...due to high number of orders, we prepared new models and tried to produce the way as customers asked us. However, they were not satisfied with the women’s shirt and they said that they want to give all orders to one supplier, there was nothing we could do.” As one respondent examined: “Parties may face with conflict in sales conditions such as mode of payment, loading date. In this situation we may cancel the job at the beginning of the meeting. For example, customer demands a 90 days’ letter of credit but we are able to issue a 30 days’ letter of credit.”

The third one is noted as episodic relationship with predetermined ending (Tähtinen et al. 2007) with seven relationships reported from interviews. One manager from chicken poultry industry witnessed:

In Iran we came across with a problem related to installation of poultry. They did not accept what we said; however, no party is right hundred percent according to our opinion. When you have a disagreement in the daily life, one party maybe has ten percent mistake and the other party may have ninety percent mistake. The buyer-seller relationship is like a real life. Customer is still using this project but in the next time it will buy from another seller.

From the same company, similar relationship dissolution was realized. As the respondent indicated: “People in Arab countries are very relaxed, they make several

mistakes. This time, we are the initiator of relationship dissolution, we break our ties with that firm. They work with another seller in their next project. We do not work with customers that we anticipate we will have problems.”

Respondents declare that the fourth one is continuous relationship with natural dissolution (Tähtinen et al. 2007), four relationships are seen from interviews. The relationship becomes unimportant within a time and parties do not need each other anymore in this type. As one respondent recognized: “We made a production and sent products to this customer for once and we could never work again because of customer’s bankruptcy.” In this situation, the relationship loses its function since one of the parties is out of the business and does not need this relationship anymore. Another example given by respondent:

At this time, we had a list of products and prices to sell in Bulgaria, customer was mistaken to give this list to us, we no longer needed that customer. Customer passed us order in total € 75,000,000, we replied to the order by indicating full price; a price without a discount. “I do not want to work with you” was the meaning of this behaviour.

The least common types gathered from interviews are episodic relationship with chosen ending (Tähtinen et al. 2007), and episodic relationship with forced ending (Tähtinen et al. 2007). One of respondent from infrastructure industry in which project-based relationships were seen noted an episodic relationship with forced ending: “After riots and revolution in Libya, one customer who paid for the products could not receive them, products still have been awaiting in the Bingazi port ever since one and a half year. For instance, I got the payment. The partner firm said that the firm went bankrupt.” This sentence proves that an episodic project-based relationship was interrupted by external environment and it was forced to end before the completion of the project. A respondent explained an episodic relationship with chosen ending:

In our firm, the relationship dissolution is realized in the way that project is completed before predetermined time. For example, a project which was planned to last until 2017 ended after 2015. An auto manufacturer told us they will not use a specific engine part anymore in their production due to unprofitability and ceased to buy this part from us.

This example showed that a purchase for existing project with predetermined time frame may be ended by buyer.

8.3. REASONS OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

8.3.1. The Categorization of Influencing Factors and Events

8.3.1.1. Predisposing Factors and Precipitating Events

Predisposing factors and precipitating events (Halinen and Tähtinen, 2002) were observed by respondents in the interviews. Lack of experience is one of the predisposing factor that cause the relationship to dissolve. One manager recognized: “Both America and Mexico ended in two years’ time, it was interesting. I received both orders and lost both customers at the same time. Those were my first exports, at the times I used to be inexperienced.” Another predisposing factor witnessed is customer setting rules for the relationship continuation. As one clothing industry export manager noted: “Customer gave me a guideline when we first had started to work. Within this guideline everything was specified; from label of washing instructions to sizes of shirts. Besides, in case there was a mistake, seller would pay a compensation which was specified for this mistake. If seller declines to pay it, the relationship is ended.”

Another predisposing factor is war leading decrease in trust. Letter of credit is one of the most secure mode of payment in international trade, which both guarantees exporter and supplier. Exporters’ bank guarantees exporter to receive their payment and importers’ bank guarantees importer to receive products with stated quality and within a determined time. In this case, war decreases trust of seller to their customer about proper payment. By issuing letter of credit, the timing of payment will be assured. One respondent declared: “Letter of credit guarantees both parties. But, we prefer cash basis with the firms where in their country war exists.”

Acquisition of customer’s company can also be stated as a precipitating event. One export manager witnessed a similar event and exited the relationship due to this reason. As he observed: “The change in customer’s owners just ends the relationship between us, it makes us to exit, because every time we have a question mark about new owners.” Another precipitating event reported via interviews is customer notice of termination. As one informant from clothing industry marked:

“With American customers, there was a signal all the time, they said to fix this, fix that; or we could not work together again. We did our best but they were never satisfied.”

8.3.1.2. Deterrents (Preventing Factors) of Relationship Dissolution

Deterrents of dissolution were observed from the interviews. Lower prices are recognized as a deterrent of dissolution. As one respondent from clothing industry explained: “I thought that Nigerian customer would not purchase from me anymore. However, they continue to work with me, may be thinking that they cannot find a product cheaper than mine.”

Another deterrent of dissolution is customer satisfaction due to quality of products. The same clothing industry export manager examined: “One of our customer said that they do not like Chinese patterns and designs of Chinese shirts. Turkey’s shirts and their designs are of higher quality than Chinese’s.” Customer satisfaction of customer service is also stated by respondents. One of the managers in packaging industry revealed that: “One of our customers does not give up our relationship because we are providing a superior service. I don’t suppose that their other intermediaries work hard for them. So, they cannot switch to other alternatives.”

In addition, investment in a relationship or TSI is mentioned in the interviews as a deterrent of dissolution by increasing switching costs for customers. As one respondent from packaging industry explained: “...In this situation, customer makes investment in this firm and continues to purchase from us as they cannot stand to switch to another seller.” Investment in a relationship leads to an increase in trust of a partner as it is seen from these words of respondent:

With the invitation of customer to our factory, we showed them the investments that we made after the customer dissatisfaction of product. We bought an X-Ray machine to detect a piece of broken glass in a jar. Customer perceived that we would never let this happen again and he/she trusted our word. Then, we continued to work with them the second year.

Besides, high performance level of the customer or profitability of customer is a relationship deterrent specified within interviews. As one respondent claimed:

“We had a customer that we wanted to give up working with, however they were so profitable that we could not do.” In this example, seller had a dissolution intention.

Monitoring the performance of the intermediary as an anti-shirking measure (Petersen et al., 2015) is another deterrent of dissolution specified by a respondent. As one manager’s words: “In order to maintain good relationships with customers, seller has to control how the relationship is going on, not only specific times, but every time.”

Moreover, the role of SIVC is observed in a relationship as a deterrent of dissolution. One manager recognized:

A customer is supported financially in a trade fair by paying the stand fee or is given a free catalog and brochure or promotion products are provided such as notebook, pen. Relationships must be warm at all times, that is the only responsibility of salespeople. Not only selling products but also provide customer retention of existing customers.

Another relationship deterrent found from the interviews is avoiding from the damage of the firm image and negative word-of-mouth. As one manager mentioned:

There can be some circumstances that we do not accept normally but accept in order to provide customer satisfaction. For these long-term relationships, we sacrifice some of our profits. You know the matter of relationships, good customers may make you gain six to seven new customers by recommendation and the bad customers may lose 20 customers including prospective customers.

8.3.2. The Categorization of Relationship Dissolution Reasons

The coding of relationship dissolution reasons specified 130 reasons for 67 relationships from the interview. That justifies the assertion of multiple motives/reasons cause the dissolution of buyer-seller relationships (Pressey and Selassie, 2007: 138). The author introduced eight reason categories based on coding results. These categories are reported to be firm-related reasons, customer-related reasons, behavioral reasons, environmental reasons and other reasons. These reason categories are third order themes while the subcategories form second order themes. Second order themes are also divided into first order themes. In the following sections, each of the reasons will be discusses based on interview results.

8.3.2.1. Firm-Related Reasons

From interviews, 31 firm-related reasons were identified by the author (see Table 9). This category also comprised of six second order themes which were product-related reasons, customer service problems, price-related reasons, quality problems, firm fault, strategic decision of change in business of a seller, customer management problems. The most referred second order theme among them was product-related reasons (eleven relationships). After that, firm fault was reported mostly, since it was cited in nine relationships from interviews. Then, customer service problems (three relationships), and quality problems (four relationships) were stated commonly.

Table 9. Firm-Related Reasons

3rd Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	1st Order Theme	Number of Relationships
Firm-Related Reasons	Customer service problems	Customer service policies	1
	Customer service problems	Non-adaptive sales proposal	2
	Product-related	Unsatisfactory product (low perceived value of the product, customer unsatisfied with the quality of service)	9
	Product-related	Inability to meet product requirements of a customer (product requires too much adaptation, material used in the production does not meet customer's needs)	3
	Product-related	Old product technology: unable to compete in the market	1
	Product-related	Lack of required product knowledge	1
	Price-related	Price too high for customer	2
	Firm-fault	Inability to meet customer requirements: (mode of payment)	4
	Firm-fault	Inability to deliver products on time	2
	Firm-fault	Incompatibility problems between customer and firm: (e.g. product, mode of payment, time of delivery)	2
	Firm-fault	Causing a competition: Intermediary wants to be the only seller of the product in a country	1
	Strategic decision	Change in business: seller wants to enter market by itself by launching a firm in that country	1
	Customer management problems	Inability to identify customer needs	1

Product-related reasons also included four first order themes which were unsatisfactory product, inability to meet product requirements of a customer, old product technology and lack of required product knowledge. Unsatisfactory product was referred in nine relationships and inability to meet product requirements of a customer was cited in three relationships, lack of product knowledge and old product technology were referred in one relationship for each. Unsatisfactory product included two items: low perceived value of the product, customer unsatisfied with the quality of service. An example from unsatisfactory product's first order theme, low perceived value of the product was explained by the respondent as:

We were working with an English customer, at the beginning everything was fine. The product that we sold to them was of a medium quality. After three years, the breakdown of the product started to occur and buyer's customers started to complain. The buyer's reputation was damaging due to customer's perception about firm, thinking that their products were for high segment market. So, these problems led the customer to stop buying from us despite there was no problem in our relationship.

One of the respondent referred decreased quality of their product and admitted that this led to a damage of customer's reputation as he was selling to their customers in the market. As the words of informant claimed:

We were working with an English customer, at the beginning everything was fine. The product that we sold to them was of a medium quality. After three years, the breakdown of the product started to occur and buyer's customers started to complain. The buyer's reputation was damaging due to customer's perception about firm, thinking that their products were for high segment market. So, these problems led the customer to stop buying from us despite there was no problem in our relationship.

Another example of unsatisfactory product as a reason was stated by a respondent:

The window could be opened with a ten percent angle, because they were automated not manual. Based on the need of airing, they were opening with ten percent angle. But not everything from A to Z can be stated in the agreement, it already has eight to ten pages. If we add all the details in it, it reaches to fifty pages and nobody reads it. Customer said that it should have opened with thirty two percent angle.

Low perceived value of the product was also declared by one of the informants from food industry. He explained the situation that: "One of the most important reasons of cancellation of orders is producing product of a poor quality. For example, there is a customer that I take care of in Germany. They came us with quality problem, and there had been other quality problems since 2012. A piece of glass in pickles' jar was found in their order." The same informant continued to discuss this quality problem:

“The export products which are of poor quality are sent to foreign buyers. When this happens, you deceive the customer once, deceive it secondly, in the third time order is cancelled. Because, they assume that they will get their money's worth, they perceive that the products will be of high quality.” The reason of low quality product sale of this seller is the differences in tastes in food industry. As the same respondent continued to explain:

For example, product of high quality that we sold to Germany cannot be sold to Libya or Far East countries with the same profit rates. Because these countries' buyers' purpose is to full their stomach. But for the German, it means to find pleasure in it. If ever the seller couldn't provide the flavor, customer may have cancelled the order directly.

Dissatisfaction of customer with the quality of seller's service was an item of unsatisfactory product, explained by a respondent. As her words conveyed:

We had produced and had sent the product. Then the product was stucked around in the delivery process. Customer nagged us that we said that products would be received in two weeks but it came in three weeks. Due to these kinds of reasons we also lose customers, due to receiving customer complaints of service quality, this is another side of it.

Inability to meet product requirements of a customer as the first order theme of product-related reasons consisted of two items: product requires too much adaptation and “material used in the production does not meet customer's needs”.

As one of the sellers spoke off:

Customer asked us to attach a barcode behind labels of shirts. Labels include product's color, size and barcode number. They used to give us the barcode numbers and we used to attach them after production. Once, the barcode numbers were erased during the delivery, I didn't know how. Our workers might have erased them by accident while attaching them, so the numbers were not read.

In this example, product did not meet the customer requirements that were given to the seller in terms of guidelines before the orders were received. One of the sellers acknowledged that the material they used in the production did not meet their customer's needs; which was the item in the first order theme of inability to meet product requirements of a customer. As seller put to the author: “That customer asked us to change the material of packaging, however we could not supply it from Turkish suppliers. They did not accept it if we imported it due to increased costs and prices.” Old product technology was mentioned by a respondent as the first order theme. Seller decided to exit the market since they became unable to compete in the

market with their old product technology. This is how he explained the situation: “The gas we used in our product is now under a ban in Europe. As our products work with that old-fashioned gas, there is no sense of being in that market automatically. We will not be able to compete in the market due to the higher price of the product. That is why we had to exit from Germany.” Lack of required product knowledge of a customer was also referred by the respondents. As one of them explained: “Our production molds for women’s shirt did not fit the way they asked for. The chest parts of shirts did not fit exactly, so the relationship was over. I had never produced a women’s shirt before. Those were my first exports, in the times I used to be inexperienced.”

Firm fault as a second order theme comprised of four first order themes which were inability to meet customer requirements, inability to deliver products on time, incompatibility problems between customer and firm and causing a competition. Inability to meet customer requirements about the mode of payment was expressed by respondents as reasons of buyer-seller relationship dissolution in the interviews (four relationships). This example referred the inability to meet customer requirements about the mode of payment. As it was mentioned by a respondent: “A customer asked me to pay fifty percent of payment when the product is delivered first to Istanbul. Then, customer asked me to deliver products to Slovenia and to pay remaining amount afterwards. I did not accept that offer, I demanded a cash basis. I said that if they did not pay cash, they should not buy from me.” Customer and seller could not meet on a common ground about mode of payment and their relationship ended at a very early stage. Seller’s inability to deliver products on time (two relationships) was specified as other first order theme of firm fault. As one of the respondent pointed out:

If you don't provide necessary logistics connections, work with silly cargo agencies, it may end up with cancellation of order. If you repeat the late deliveries, first time was okay, second time was okay, but third time it was not okay. Because, our competitors who have strong logistics connections are very attractive and your orders are cancelled.

Also, inability to deliver products on time was mentioned by the respondent from chicken poultry industry. He stated that, during the installation of the project, some problems came to light. The delay of the installation of product seems like firm-related reason, seller’s fault. Another firm fault was reported to be causing a

competition in the target market where only one intermediary should have been selected. Informant from ceramic industry implied that:

We are selling ceramic to a large-sized American customer. When we found a new customer from America, other customer started to behave coquettishly. They said that they were buying from us as much as they can. Asked me why we were selling to another customer too. They asked us to terminate all ties and bonds with other customer, if we didn't they would do.

In addition, incompatibility problems between customer and firm (e.g. mode of payment, time of delivery) was cited as the first order theme of firm fault. One informant declared that there could be conflict in sales conditions such as mode of payment, loading date. The respondent state that: "In this situation we may cancel the job at the beginning of the meeting. For example, customer demands a 90 days' letter of credit but we are able to issue a 30 days' letter of credit."

Customer service problems (three relationships) were also consisted of two first order themes; customer service policies and non-adaptive sales proposal. Customer service policies as a firm-related reason was cited by an informant: "After some time of the delivery of the product, we were contacted by customer to install the product. But we did not claim to install it. So, intermediary firm went there for installation." In this example, the product requires to be installed first by seller as refrigerators or washing machines. However, firm should have made customer understand that they won't provide installation service before selling the product, the customer service policies of seller was not clear. Another reason was non-adaptive sales proposal offered by seller. As the words of the manager from chicken poultry industry asserted:

The window could be opened with a ten percent angle, because they were automated not manual. Based on the need of airing, they were opening with ten percent angle. But not everything from A to Z can be stated in the agreement, it already has eight to ten pages. If we add all the details in it, it reaches to fifty pages and nobody reads it. Customer said that it should have opened with thirty two percent angle.

This example showed that seller did not ask the customer in what angle he want the window to be opened. This could be offered by seller to be added in the agreement as seller is familiar with the product. They also said that customers were generally farmers, so it is normal that they are not aware of the agreements' every detail. Seller was experienced and should have known that after the installation of the poultry,

customer might have been dissatisfied with it. Another example of this reason was reported by a respondent:

We had a customer from Libya and they wanted to make purchase in an incredible volume last year. However, we couldn't able to offer deferred payment to them due to political risk and existence of war in the country. They also couldn't work with cash basis. We have known the firm before, but last year there was a chance of getting a huge sales order. But we couldn't take that risk.

Moreover, price-related reasons (two relationships) were also one of the second order themes of firm-related reasons. One of the informants noted that their customers found the price too high. As it was put to the author by an export manager:

We used to have another big customer that we used to send thirty ton products every month. The reason of ending the relationship with them was price, they did not like our prices, they found our prices high. We are a medium-sized firm and we have a certain amount of costs, so we can no longer offer prices under our costs. There is no sense of sacrificing from our interests to keep customers.

Another respondent declared the same situation: "Sometimes a customer is only price-oriented. The price is acceptable when the agreement is signed and relationship continues for a while. Whenever customer gets a better offer or better price, switches to alternative supplier and ends the relationship with you."

Strategic decision of change in business was noted as a reason of dissolution (one relationship) since the seller wanted to enter market by itself by launching a firm in that country. The words of exporter implied that:

My strategy was to launch a firm in Bulgaria, I wanted to enter that market by myself. At the beginning, we hid this intent and started to increase prices gradually. We were selling more than one customers in that market. In three months we marked up the prices of some products for some customers. The reason behind this to make customers understand that we did not mark up the prices for every customer. Also our objective was to make them think we were insincere and to make them terminate the relationship by themselves.

Besides, customer management problems were cited as a firm-related reason (one relationship). Inability to identify customer needs was designated by a respondent. In one of the example, seller did not clarify all details of the agreement with the customer. That is why problems after the installation of the product emerged within a relationship and created conflict between them. The chicken poultry's window angle should have been discussed with the customer before as the customer

asked them to open the windows with thirty two percent angle after the installation of the product.

8.3.2.2. Customer-Related Reasons

This category of reasons consisted of 28 examples from interviews (see Table 10). The second order themes of this third order theme were decrease in economic performance of the customer/unprofitability of customer, product deletion of the seller (Pressey and Mathews, 2003), customer fault, contract breaches, changes in the structure of customer's company, changes customer needs. Customer fault also included four first order themes which were incompatibility problems between customer and firm (e.g. about product, mode of payment, time of delivery), customer's overdependency on his/her intermediary, customer's not pay attention to agreement's details and inability to provide seller with the necessary information.

Table 10. Customer-Related Reasons

3rd Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	1st Order Theme	Number of Relationships
Customer-Related Reasons	Contract breaches	Inability to pay on time	1
	Economic performance of the customer decreased/ Unprofitability of customer	Inability to pay its debts, low intermediary performance	12
	Customer fault	Incompatibility problems between customer and firm (e.g. product, mode of payment, time of the delivery), customer's overdependency on his/her intermediary, customer's not pay attention to agreement's details, inability to provide seller with the necessary information, customers that demand too much product adaptation	6
	Product deletion of the seller	Due to decreased product quality when sent to distant countries	2
	Changes in the structure of customer's firm	Bankruptcy of customer, death of the owner of the customer's firm, acquisition of customer's firm	6
	Changed customer needs	Completion of the project before predetermined time	1

Economic performance of the customer/ unprofitability of customer was mentioned in twelve relationships. As one of the informants brought up: “Devaluation in Azerbaijan caused a decrease by fifty percent in our customer’s volume of buying, because customer could not collect their receivables in that currency.” Another informant discussed the same situation with these words:

Everything is up to decrease in profitability. In Azerbaijan, devaluation, a money crisis was realized and customer’s purchase decreased incredibly. So, we have decreased the budget that we spend to this market and have started to offer discounted prices to other markets. Automatically we have ceased to sell with the same prices at that market.

Besides, it was put to the author by an informant:

There was no conversation between us about ending our relationship. However, customer did not give an order for one month, then another one month passed and still no order. Their debt remained unpaid and it reached to 1,000,000 TL, so you could not open an order for this customer because the debt was growing apace and customer did not pay it. Of course there was no mistrust about nonpayment of a debt, but it is a must to collect payment for the continuance of this firm, isn’t it? So, compulsorily we ended it; if we had received a little payment, we could have continued with this customer otherwise.

Moreover, one respondent designated that economic crisis affected their relationship. As her words implied: “We used to send nearly 50 tons of packaging to this customer, our business was very well. Then we had lost him, of course there was only one cause of it, crisis in Russia. Otherwise, everything was okay. In Russia an economic crisis began, we used to sell with dollars. As parities had changed, the customer could not make the payments.” Another first order theme in this reason category is low intermediary performance. As an export manager pointed out: “Every customer has purchasing limits, realized order of purchases must be close to the ones that is predetermined. We make a conversation if the limits are not realized, however at all times relationships were preserved in the past.”

Customer fault as the second order theme was another customer-related reason (six relationships) stated by respondents. One of the first order themes of this reason was incompatibility problems between customer and firm about product and agreement terms such as mode of payment, time of delivery. An example of incompatibility problem about product was cited by the respondent: “One customer asked me to produce very detailed shirts; collar, yoke with different color, also order volume was very low. Ten shirts from every model, in total 500 shirts were

requested, however I did not want to accept this job, it was profitable but I am not a tailor.” So, seller did not accept the customer that was demanding too much customization of products since seller was a small-sized firm. What customer demanded and what seller could produce were not compatible in this example. Another respondent explained incompatibility problem about one agreement terms; mode of payment: “A customer asked me to pay fifty percent of payment when the product is delivered first to Istanbul. Then, customer asked me to deliver products to Slovenia and to pay remaining amount afterwards. I did not accept that offer, I demanded a cash basis. I said that if they did not pay cash, they should not buy from me.” Also, one informant acknowledged that: “Parties may face with conflict in sales conditions such as mode of payment, loading date. In this situation we may cancel the job at the beginning of the meeting. For example, customer demands a 90 days’ letter of credit but we are able to issue a 30 days’ letter of credit.” Another first order theme of customer fault was customer’s not paying attention to agreement’s details. One of the respondent who work in chicken poultry industry disclosed that:

As we are engaged in project-based sales, there can be some items in an agreement that not be mentioned. Of course, when there is a conflict, agreement is used as a base even it was specified or not. But as I said, our customers are farmers and they were not much interested with the agreement. They paid and wanted to make us do the project but the project inside his head did not materialize sometimes.

Customer’s overdependency on his/her intermediary as the first order theme of customer fault was also brought up by a respondent. One of the informants explained that one of their Russian customers was very dependent on an intermediary, rather than depending on their partner firm in Ukraine. As her words implied: “When the communication gap emerged, the relationship ended abruptly as the intermediary faded away from the scene. When intermediary faded away, the Ukranian customer became unrecognizable to our customer. Then our customer worked hard to provide connection with their partner firm but the business was over. Inability to provide seller with the necessary information was also mentioned as the first order theme of customer fault from interviews. One of the respondent from chicken poultry industry stated that, during the installation of the project, some problems came to light. The delay of the installation of product stemmed from customer’s fault because it was customer’s responsibility to give the right sizes of the poultry and bring sufficient

workers to build the poultry. The conflict between parties was solved but customer did not give any order since then. As it was explained to the author by the respondent: “This is two-sided problem, we send supervisor and they gave workers. When they provided us workers late, we were unable to finish the installation on time. We make one project out of 5,000 materials, so there might be some mistakes in our part too.” Contract breaches were also cited as the second order theme of customer fault from interviews. One of the respondent explained that:

We agreed to work with open account, buyer should have paid in 90 days. However, customer made a payment in 120 days once and 180 days in another order. Seller warned customer verbally that they did not comply the details of the agreement. He said that, they did not pay in 90 days, if they want to continue working with them, we could work in cash basis and our price would increase. Then, after the evaluation of firm, they decided to end the relationship.

Another first order theme of customer fault is dealing with customers that demand too much product adaption. As one respondent declared: “That customer is very compelling. He/she compels our sales people that cares about him/her and is very demanding. He/she is asking so many things, compels our production, so whole firm complains from her/him, but...” In this example, seller had a dissolution intention. But could not give up the relationship, as Dwyer et al. (1987: 14) stated that the deterrents of dissolution was more attractive than motivators of dissolution.

Another second order theme of customer-related reason was product deletion of the seller (two relationships). In some circumstances, sellers have to voluntarily stop selling of their products and exit some of their relationships. As one of the informants from refrigeration industry discussed:

The gas we used in our product is now under a ban in Europe. As our products work with that old-fashioned gas, there is no sense of being in that market automatically. Even we attempt to invent new product to serve Europe, the costs will be high since in Turkey there is not sufficient demand for this product. We will not able to compete in the market due to the higher price of the product. That is why we had to exit from Germany.

Moreover, one respondent explained similar situation; they had to stop selling of PVC profile accessories to geographically distant countries due to decreased product quality. As the words of the informant revealed: “Some PVC profile accessories that we exported by shipping became mouldy once and we decided not to sell these products to geographically distant countries. We thought that in case we get customer complaints from moulded products, we direct these customers to get those products

from domestic market and nearby markets.” These examples justified Pressey and Mathews’ (2003) suggestion that product deletion of seller is used as an excuse to leave unwanted importer without telling the truth of bad performance or product.

Changes in the structure of company (six relationships) as the second order theme also consisted of three first order themes: bankruptcy of customer, death of the owner of the customer and acquisition of customer’s firm. Among the reasons of changes in the structure of company, the bankruptcy of customer was noted as the most commonly seen reason (four relationships). As one of the respondent mentioned: “We used to have a customer in Greece. We used to send 150-200 containers product every week, it was very serious amount. Then, after the crisis in Greece, customer firm went bankrupt immediately.” Another respondent explained the death of customer firm’s owner:

We had been working for a long time, once we realized that the last payment did not paid. So, we asked them and learned that the owner of the company had died and his son was manager of the company. In Balkan countries we have witnessed this scenario frequently. The sons could not manage the company properly. After some time, they announced that they started to withdraw from industry and decreased their sales volume.

Also, acquisition of company was conveyed as a reason by one of the exporters: “The change in customer’s owners just ends the relationship between us, it makes us to exit, because every time we have a question mark about new owners.” The idea behind this; activity links, resource ties and actor bonds (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995) were formed with the old owners. When the new owner came to customer’s firm, all these link, ties and bonds may change; so they should be developed over again.

Another second order theme: the changed customer needs was also cited as reason of dissolution in the interviews. The first order theme was the completion of project-based job before predetermined time. As it was put to the author by respondent:

In our firm, the relationship dissolution is realized in the way that project is completed before predetermined time. For example, a project which was planned to last until 2017 ended after 2015. An auto manufacturer told us they will not use a specific engine part anymore in their production due to unprofitability and ceased to buy this part from us.

8.3.2.3. Behavioral Reasons

From interviews, behavioral reasons were specified in sixteen relationships (see Table 11). According to thematic analysis, five second order themes were asserted: communication problems, opportunism, decrease in trust, unresolved conflict and personal relationship-related reasons. Unresolved conflict, opportunistic behaviours of buyer/seller and communication problems were reported to be seen most commonly.

Table 11. Behavioral Reasons

3rd Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	1st Order Theme	Number of Relationships
Behavioral Reasons	Communication problems	Not maintaining strong links with other party, problems in agreement	4
	Opportunistic behaviors of buyer/seller	Not paying regularly and on time, use of money for self interest	5
	Poor boundary spanner relations	Poor personal/working relationship	2
	Unresolved conflict	After product installation: dissatisfaction of customer, in product's details,	4
	Decrease in trust	A consequence of opportunism	1

Opportunistic behaviours of seller/customer were the most referred reason in this category (five relationships). An export manager stated that they were working with an open account, customer had to pay in 90 days. However, before the payment was due, the owners of the customer firm had changed. After the acquisition of customer's company, new owners behave opportunistic and tried to decrease the sold products' price. As export manager spoke off:

They tried everything not to pay my products' price. Products were in their stock, they had already sold. They said that these products were of poor quality, not like the promised one. They called me and asked me to delete the fifty percent of the price. So, I wanted a stock list and understood that they were trying to deceive me, the prices in the list was not realistic. They behaved deviously.

After the third party involvement of commercial attaché, the conflict ended, but due to broken trust of seller, they ended the relationship. He cited that: "The change in

customer's owners just ends the relationship between us, it makes us to exit, because every time we have a question mark about new owners." Also, decrease in trust is a relational/behavioral reason. It can be observed that, not only broken trust ended the relationship, it is a precipitating event that accelerates the dissolution. In this example, opportunism caused a decrease in trust, and the relationship ended accordingly. Another example of opportunism was acknowledged by the same manager. As it was conveyed to the author by him:

My strategy was to launch a firm in Bulgaria, I wanted to enter that market by myself... We said that we would continue to support the customer but with our new firm in Bulgaria. We revealed our objective to them in the end. We said them to give their product and customer list, so that we would not compete in the same market. But I saw that they wrote every market nearly. So, we believed that they were insincere. We made our installments and learned from them which products Bulgarian customers prefer and said to them we did not think of working with them.

In this example, seller perceived that customer tried to deceive him by customer and product list and thought that he was insincere and opportunistic. Opportunistic behaviours employed by the customer is discussed:

A customer from England gave up the order due to dissatisfaction of the price. They did not pay regularly, we came from behind during a year. They said that they would send € 10,000 instead € 100,000 of their due payment. So, customer made us finance him for € 90,000, but after some time... We do not have one customer, we have at least 30-40 customers in our portfolio and in sizeable amounts. However, we pay in cash for cucumber sellers, electricity, insurance. At the end of the day, we are the one that make loss. It is not customer's inability to pay, it is a choice of not paying. They used us as a factoring company, they used our money.

Unresolved conflict initiated by customer/seller was also revealed by the respondents as a reason of dissolution (four relationships). The example of opportunism was also related to conflict between parties. As he pointed out: "We consulted to commercial attaché in that country and asked to calculate costs of this export transaction, they gave us estimated numbers. We talked to customer via attaché and said that they must pay this payment...We ended our relationship with that firm completely." Another respondent also witnessed a similar situation, conflict emerged after the installation of product and customer became dissatisfied. He reported that:

In Iran we come across with a problem related to installation of poultry. They did not accept what we said; however, no party is right hundred percent according to our opinion. When you have a disagreement in the daily life, one party maybe has ten percent mistake and the other party may have ninety

percent mistake. The buyer-seller relationship is like a real life. Customer is still using this project but in the next time he/she will buy from another seller.

Also, the same respondent talked about his other relationship. They had a conflict in product's details after the installation. The subject was the windows' function, they were automated and customer did not state the degree of opening of the window before the agreement was signed. Customer stated that window was not working well, a very subjective perspective.

Communication problems were reported in four relationships. They were reported by the respondent in this way:

Several problems arise from communication. We have a relationship with several countries in the world: Australia, China, Korea, Mexico. As we are doing business with different geographies, we talk in a daytime while they talk in night time, this also matters. When we talk in summer time, they talk in winter time, this matters too. Since the customer is far away from us, within the project there are every kinds of communication problems. We have sales people that talk their languages in addition to English, however that is to convey, even so...

Another example given by a respondent stated: "After some time of the delivery of the product, we were contacted by customer to install the product. But we did not claim to install it. So, intermediary firm went there for installation." This example also revealed that there was a communication problem when agreement was signed and customer was unaware of the installation process. In this example, also communication problem existed: "We are talking about a Swiss firm, they are French-speaking and they don't want a sales people which is English-speaking. They precisely demand a French-speaking sales people that cares about them. They are very capricious and they want to get what they want as soon as possible."

Moreover, poor boundary spanner relations were specified by respondents (two relationships). The first order theme of this reason is poor personal/working relationship. One of the informants quoted that: "That firm had a nerd purchasing specialist, exactly a nerd. That is why the relationship did not work and they switched to another supplier." Another respondent pointed out that: In Arab countries, there are some people that will make a trouble after the customer no matter what you did. You lose them whether you want it or not."

8.3.2.4. Environmental Reasons

Among all the reasons, this reason category was the most cited one based on interviews. In 40 relationships, external/environmental reasons were acknowledged by respondents (see Table 12). This category consisted of four second order themes which were political factors, economic factors, high geographic distance and high cultural background differences. Political factors were also ranked as the most declared reason since they were stated in 21 relationships. After political factors, economic factors were reported mostly (fourteen relationships).

Table 12. External/Environment Reasons

3rd Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	1st Order Theme	Number of Relationships
External/ Environment Reasons	Political factors	Terror, war, civil war, political instability of country	14
	Political factors	Political conflict between countries: importer country's prevention of Turkish products	3
	Political factors	Political conflict between countries: political events that lead tension	1
	Political factors	Political conflict between countries: regulations of customer's government	3
	Economic factors	Economic crisis and the devaluation of currency leading to a decrease in the purchasing power	13
	Economic factors	No bank guarantee was given due to country risk	1
	Attribution of negative outcomes to external reasons		1
	High geographic distance		1
	Effect of climate	Seasonality in orders: In winter customer visits decrease and orders decrease accordingly	1
	High cultural background differences	Not reading agreement	2

Political factors as the second order theme comprised of two first order themes which were terror, war, civil war, political instability of a country; political conflict between countries. Within political factors; terror, war, civil war, political

instability of a country was ranked first (fourteen relationships). As one of the respondent cited: “We started to work with Algeria recently however, now it is an incredibly political risk holding country... We would work with them as an intermediary in that country, but now there is no sense of our presence in that country anymore. So I cancelled it at the beginning of our relationship due to political risks.” Another respondent explained that: “The relationship with Syria also aborted totally. I used to sell approximately product worth € 750,000 every year. The reason was war, border gate was closed. They wanted to order again with cash basis however it was not possible to bring money due to closed borders (in Syria).” As one of the informant declared: “How can I sell products to the countries where war continues? Most of our exports used to be with Iraq, how can I export there now? For example, in Libya there is no government now, how can I export there? In Iraq and Syria there is a war.” Political conflict between countries were disclosed in seven relationships. One of the items of political conflict was found to be government regulations causing an increase in product costs (three relationship). As one of informants detailed:

In Iraq, quality certification document is requested from Turkish exporters whereas European exporters are not obliged to. Automatically we had to compete in the market and due to decrease profitability, we decided to ignore these markets conveying that there is no sense of our presence as we became unable to compete in the market due to increased costs.

Another item of political conflict was political events that lead tension (one relationships). The bombing of Turkish ship in Libya was explained to the author by a respondent. As he stated, they were about to send products to Libya and after this event, it was cancelled due to tension between countries. Another item of political conflict, importer country’s prevention of Turkish products (three relationships) was witnessed by respondents. One of them spoke of: “We were going to dispatch in high volume but they do not want to buy Turkish products. Their government is making a trouble now. Yes, customer wanted to buy it however after the government prohibited, they were unable to do.” Another respondent gave details of political event that lead tension between Turkey and Russia, as he explained:

Russian government treats differently to trucks and products that are coming from Turkey. Russian customer thought that it was not related to relationships, it was a crisis between governments. Government’s behavior makes doing business hard and leads to inability to trade. So, Russian customer gives up

working with seller compulsorily, because their firm has to continue to trade. The firm will start buying from the Greeks or the Spanish.

Besides, one respondent conveyed that Russian government regulations as a reason of dissolution, as these regulations caused an increase in product costs (item of the first order theme: political conflict between countries). As the words of respondent declared:

The relationship with Russia lasted ten years. Russian government now does not let the customer to trade with us. Russian government asked us to bring products to Hakkari, it takes time and increases our costs. So, the price of the product increases too. Then, customer became unable to buy from us, they used to receive products in five days but now it takes a month.

Economic factors as the second order theme included first order themes of economic crisis with the devaluation of currency that lead to a decrease in the purchasing power and no bank guarantee was given due to country risk. Decrease in the purchasing power due to economic crisis and devaluation of currency was specified by thirteen respondents. One of them acknowledged that: "In Azerbaijan, devaluation, a money crisis was realized and customer's purchase decreased incredibly." As one of the respondent disclosed: "Devaluation in Azerbaijan caused a decrease by fifty percent in our customer's volume of buying, because customer could not collect their receivables in that currency." Another example of economic crisis was inferred by a respondent: "The economic crisis in Greece where the largest market of our firm and best customers are located in, affected us badly. For six months' time, we were unable to deliver even one box of products. Their banks were closed and accounts were frozen." Devaluation of currency leading to decrease in purchasing power also brought up by another respondent: "We were exporting to Egypt but their currency was devalued. So, our euro/dollar exchange rate was damaged. Customer stated that his project was working, but at that moment he could not import due to country's situation. Customer said that I could import it after 5 weeks' time. We said okay and approved the order." Economic crisis in Russia also affected sellers negatively. These words of respondent revealed that: "In Russia an economic crisis began, we used to sell with dollars. As parities had changed, the customer could not make the payments." One of the informants perceived the crisis in Europe and end its relationship with Greek customer by thinking proactively. As it was put to the author by him:

Actually, the foundation of our firm in Bulgaria realized as we anticipated the financial risk and crisis in Europe before. We used to sell products worth € 250,000.000 to one customer in Greece until 2012-2013. Now, they may not buy even products worth € 30,000.000. The reason of this is the money crisis in Greece. We cut our relationship with our Greek customer and made them a customer of our firm in Bulgaria and increased our profitability.

An example of no bank guarantee was given due to country risk was quoted by one of the respondent: "...So I cancelled it at the beginning of our relationship (with Algeria) due to political risks. We used to work with an open account. Eximbank said that due to terror risk of this country, they were unable to provide a limit (bank guarantee) now. So, now there is no sense of our presence in that country anymore."

In the interviews, one of the informant mentioned the attribution of negative outcomes to external reasons. As it was declared us by her:

The reason of ending our relationship with Mexico might be...they were buying from China too ultimately. The reason that they state to me might be a pretext. They might convey that it was okay, if the fault was repeated, they would break off the relation. They do not convey that they found a firm that sells cheaper than me and that is why they end it. When they found the cheaper alternative, they leave immediately.

High geographic distance was also discussed by respondents in the interviews (one relationship). According to them, geographic distance causes communication problems between parties. As the words of an export manager illustrated:

We have a relationship with several countries in the world: Australia, China, Korea, Mexico. As we are doing business with different geographies, we talk in a daytime while they talk in night time, this also matters. When we talk in summer time, they talk in winter time, this matters too. Since the customer is far away from us, within the project there are every kinds of communication problems. We have salespeople that talk their languages in addition to English, however that is to convey, even so...

In addition, high cultural background differences (two relationships) also reported by an informant as a reason of ending their relationship. Respondent discussed that:

It depends on the cultures of customers who are located in different areas of the world. Something that perceived as a problem by some customers may be perceived as unimportant detail by another customer. Their cultures are different. There are customers that stickler for detail and customers that are not. There are customers that give importance to timing, and customers that are not.

Besides, one of the informants spoke off that customers in Arab countries do not read relationship agreement before signing it. So, some problems may be seen in those countries due to high cultural background differences. As the words of an informant from chicken poultry industry showed:

There is a complacency in Arab countries, everything works with “Wonderful!”, “I hope so!” and “All praise belongs to God.” When we go there, we also talk like this. This is how they conduct the business there. They do not read the agreement anyway and what they want or convey do not materialize. Building sizes and worker numbers do not materialize. They do user errors and do not carry out the maintenance of the poultry.

Lastly, climate effect was designated by an informant, leading to seasonality in orders. That means, in some periods of the year or some seasons customers decrease their volume of orders. As the respondent explained to the author: “We have a customer from Uzbekistan in automotive industry which has been working for two years. Climate affects us, in winter we do not travel much and go customer visits. Also customer makes seasonal purchases, the job gets slower and comes to a stopping point in winter.”

8.3.2.5. Competitor Reasons

In thirteen relationships, competitor reasons were stated by respondents (see Table 13). Interviews provided that, there were two first order themes of competitor-related reasons. The most expressed reason among them was inability to compete in the target market (eight relationships). The second most commonly seen reason was availability of alternatives together with alternative attractiveness (five relationships). Sellers stated that their relationships were affected by competitors’ actions in the market. Because of the increased costs, better offer/better price given by competitors, unethical practices of competitors and cancellation of anti-dumping duties of some countries leading to cheaper prices, sellers lost their competitiveness in the market that once they had. These reasons are first order themes of inability to compete in the target market.

Table 13. External/Competitor Reasons

3rd Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	1st Order Theme	Number of Relationships
External/Competitor reasons	Inability to compete in the target market	Due to better price, unethical practices of competitors, increased costs, cancellation of anti-dumping duties, intense competition	8
	Availability of alternatives and Alternative attractiveness		5

The first example was from inability to compete in the market. As the words of one informant showed:

In Europe we are facing with some problems. Europe used to practice anti-dumping duties up to 60-70 percent to Chinese and Malaysian products. China filed a claim to cancel this and they succeeded in February, 2016, the anti-dumping duty had been cancelled. European countries used to buy from Turkey, Poland and nearby countries. Of course when anti-dumping duties were cancelled, Chinese prices started to dominate the market. This event interrupted our sales very much, the competition increased. It was such a competition that it was impossible for us to reach that price levels.

In this example, inability to compete due to the availability of Chinese products and their attractiveness and the cancellation of anti-dumping duties were demonstrated.

The same respondent noted that:

One of our customers from Morocco told us that if they buy from China directly, their government imposes tax to them up to 25-30 percent. They informed us that there are some firms in Dubai that bring semi-manufactured products from China without paying tax. After applying some procedures, the origin of the product is changed in Dubai. The product is actually Chinese origin but a firm from Dubai is selling it. So, the customer in Morocco purchases the product without paying tax, so the price of the product is cheaper. That is why we remain below this Chinese price line.

This example explained the unethical practices of competitors and showed the effect of better price from competitors. Better offer/better price was also mentioned by a respondent: "There is another medium-sized packaging firm nearby that can offer cheaper prices due to their low costs. They had switched to that seller, there was nothing we could do."

Existence of intense competition in the market as the first order theme of the inability to compete in the target market is noted by a respondent: "In vegetable oil

industry, competition is very tough, that is what I can say. It is one of the markets that is price-oriented. In general, we are producing the best quality oil, we do not make a mix. The price remains a bit higher, there is no low quality oil production for lower market segment, single quality of product is produced.” Also, a respondent from connection equipment industry claimed: “It is very hard to compete with Chinese firms. Even so, some customers prefer more quality product with quality certificate; it depends on the market and the usage area. Some of them prefer cheaper product, our customers in North Africa seeks for the cheapest product.”

8.4. RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION PROCESS

Analyzing interviews to observe relationship dissolution process was a hard task. Interview was structured, but interviewer could not intervene the expressions of respondents frequently. Sometimes respondents skipped answers to some questions and continued to explain another event as their attention might be easily distracted.

Some of the buyer-seller relationships were ended at the start of the relationship development process, these relationships can be called as “at a very early stage ending.” It is similar to Dwyer et al.’s (1987) exploration stage of relationship development process, as parties start dyadic communication and make a few trials, but these attempts fail. As one respondent claimed: “Parties may face with conflict in sales conditions such as mode of payment, loading date. In this situation we may cancel the job at the beginning of the meeting.” Another respondent claimed: “Their products (Turkic Republics), and ours are different, the screw in here does not fit to nut in there. Turkey’s production is according to DIN standards, so we could not meet their demand at the beginning.” In this example, relationship ended after trial attempts. This example also justifies these words of Dwyer et al. (1987: 16): “...but the exploratory relationship is very fragile in the sense that minimal investment and interdependence make for simple termination.” Besides, the dissolution can be realized in any stage and in any time through the process of relationship development because of its repetitive process (Beloucif et al., 2006: 30).

The stages of dissolution process compiled from interviews will be analyzed by adopting Tahtinen’s (2002) relationship dissolution process. In the first stage

which is consideration (Tahtinen, 2002), sellers report to consider exit from a relationship. Sellers noted that due to product which requires too much adaptation, inability of competing in the market and inability of customer's payments of debts, they started to consider dissolution of the relationship. An example given by a seller considering dissolution because customer demand required too much adaptation with these words: "Customer started to ask me all the details such as how much cloth is required in production, where to find and purchase cloth. When I started to deal with all the details of the order, I thought that it was not worth the trouble." Another example is from the seller that considers to end the relationship due to inability of competing in the market, as the respondent stated: "We are selling to Iraq however, providing a new SYS French standards are compulsory now for Turkish exporters. It is like TSE standards in Turkey, they demand these standards for every product. So, this brings additional cost for us and now we are unable to sell there." In that example, increased costs of sellers prevent them from being competitive in Iraq market.

Second stage in the process is dyadic communication (Tahtinen, 2002), where seller or customer states dissatisfaction by using exit or voice option. Process ends in this stage if the disengager adopts exit option; that is one party ends the relationship without any attempt to restore it. Customers switching to another supplier due to a better offer or better price in this stage without stating dissatisfaction is very common. One of the respondent stated that economic factors lead to a decrease in volume of buying of customers automatically. The decrease in orders is related to external conditions that no one can change. So, voice option is not viable in this situation. As his/her words implied: "Devaluation in Azerbaijan caused a decrease by fifty percent in our customer's volume of buying, because customer could not collect their receivables in that currency." Sellers also may not use voice to state dissatisfaction, instead they may occupy customers with the pretext. As clothing industry export manager stated: "I said that I am very busy and we can talk later. He/she sent me some messages, I kept conveying too busy to talk right now, and in the end he/she understood that I do not want to take that job." Also, this sentence indicates that Turkish firms may adopt indirect communication as they have "high context culture." Hall (1977) made a differentiation of high context and low context

cultures (as cited in Schein, 2010: 119). A communication in high context culture is not clear, sometimes people use few words to state what they want to convey and with even a word, complex messages are conveyed. Seller did not state its dissatisfaction of customer and exited the relationship without communicating the intention of dissolution to the other party. The sentence "I am busy" is used to make customer to understand the exit intention of seller. When voice option is followed by the disengager, the process continues with the restoration stage. As one export manager noted: "Of course there may be dissatisfaction of product. In these circumstances, customer contacts us and we contact our quality team." There are several examples of adopting voice by customers to state their dissatisfaction. As one informant declared: "That customer asked us to change the material of packaging, however we could not supply it from Turkish suppliers. They did not accept it if we import it due to increased costs and prices." Also sellers adopted voice, as one respondent declared: "If you have been selling with the same price for three years and cannot make profit, you convey that's enough! Because you have been putting up electricity cost, labor cost every year. But this customer always tries to cut the price and we cannot stand it after a while."

Third stage is the restoration (Tahtinen, 2002), where restoration attempts of customers/sellers take place. In one relationship, export manager informed the author that there may be some fading away customers that neither state the dissatisfaction nor exit the relationship. Restoration stage also includes identifying and restoring the relationships with fading away customers. As the informant observed: "If we realize a fading away customer, we have to come down on them and visit them, go after them. We improve on the customers' condition in the relationship." If relationship becomes unimportant for the customer now due to a better offer or better price from competitors, no restoration attempt of customer is realized as the interviews indicated. One informant noted:

You say that's enough, but customer always tries to cut the price by getting offer from alternative suppliers. The English especially are the ones to blame causing this. English customer cancelled the order since they received a better price. But tried to make use of various problems as an excuse rather than stating the real problem which is price.

Interviews also revealed that when firms attempt to recover the relationship, there may be conflict inside firms about restoring actions decision. One of the export

managers working in a family-owned firm explained the conflict realized in their restoration stage. The words of respondent:

My father said that they are bluffing, and prevented me to pay them compensation. I'd rather pay it, even I thought to offer customers to pay a fifty percent of the compensation for saving the relationship because their purchasing volume was huge. I said to my father that we could fix machines to prevent fault and said: "Let's pay it." Besides, "If we do not pay it, they will never work with us" I continued to explain to my father.

In this stage, three exporters confirmed that they attempt to recover the relationship by trying to satisfy customer needs but their attempts failed. The majority of the restoration attempts were successful, nine relationships were recovered by seller's efforts. As one exporter declared: "If there is something that we can fix and especially it is not discussed with the customer in the beginning, if there is even a small mistake of us and the solution is on our hand, we do our best to solve the problem." From the interviews, it is observed that seller satisfied customer needs with the expense of its interests (e.g. bearing costs), by making investment in a relationship in the form of purchasing a new machinery to prevent fault and by making customer visit to seller's factory, by behaving flexible in receiving payment due to good will of customer, by preparing new agreement according to customer needs, by discovering new ways to sell such as transit trade. An example of exporter firm discovering new ways to sell such as transit trade is explained: "After Chinese effect on competition, we started to make a transit trade; buying from Chinese firms to sell European countries that accept Chinese products. When we were not able to sell Turkish products to them, we used our connections in China and tried to sell Europe again." The example of recovered relationship by making customer visit their factory is witnessed by a respondent: "Our firm is provided a brand recognition and perceived quality. With the invitation of customer to our factory, we showed them the investments that we made after the customer dissatisfaction of product. We bought an X-Ray machine to detect a piece of broken glass in a jar. We continued to work with them in the second year."

Next stage, the disengagement (Tahtinen, 2002), is realized when the restoration attempts of buyer or seller are failed in the previous stage. As export manager in packaging industry noted: "There is another medium-sized packaging firm nearby that can offer cheaper prices due to their low costs. They switched to that

seller, there was nothing we could do.” Also, export manager from clothing industry who failed to recover the relationship claimed that: “Our production molds for women’s shirt did not fit the way they asked for. The chest parts of shirts did not fit exactly, so the relationship was over.” Moreover, in some relationships seller did not attempt to recover relationship, just neglected it. An example from an export manager confirmed: “After some time of the delivery of the product, we were contacted by customer to install the product. But we did not claim to install it. So, intermediary firm went there for installation.” Also one of the previous examples justified this, export manager that did not accept to pay the compensation of the fault. Another disengagement stage example is from an exporter working in refrigeration industry. After the acquisition of customer’s company, new owners claimed that seller’s products were poor quality and behaved opportunistically not to pay for them. After the third party involvement of commercial attaché, the conflict ended, but due to broken trust of seller, they ended the relationship.

In the enabling stage (Tahtinen, 2002), disengager and other party seek for alternative partners. One of the respondent observed a customer seeks new partners to reduce its dependency to them. As the restoration attempts of packaging industry export manager failed, their customer started to seek new suppliers and switched to one of their competitors. It can be observed from these words: “There is another medium-sized packaging firm nearby that can offer cheaper prices due to their low costs. They switched to that seller, there was nothing we could do.”

In the aftermath and sense making stages (Tahtinen, 2002), it can be inferred from the interviews that employees were affected emotionally. Thinking about their mistakes in the relationship and feeling of disappointment and regret were some of the examples in this stage. As one export manager stated her regret: “Those customers were professional, things were going well in their side. If we had paid that compensation, we would continue to work with them, anyway...” Regret was also expressed by a packaging industry manager. As these words implied: “When customers that are really profitable left the relationship, you feel regret. Of course we are working too hard for our customers. Finding customers, making them work together and retaining them are really hard task. Then, the customer leaves you in some way...” Another example of manager who was feeling disappointment said

that: “The customer was one of the group companies of a big group in Italy. It was actually a big disappointment to lose them for our perspective.” Besides, a conflict inside one of seller’s firm about restoring actions decision was realized from the interviews. As the words of the respondent implied: “According to my father, it means a disaster, but he accepted to buy cloth in advance. I said to him not to buy cloth that much. He replies I should have stopped them. My father does not take a risk, he is not a risk-taker person.” From those sentences, it is observed that the evaluation of the past, thinking about past mistakes in a relationship exists after the dissolution.

8.5. RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION AS MARKETING RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

8.5.1. Organizational Relationship Termination Competence

8.5.1.1. The existence of the definition of unwanted customers

Out of eight unwanted customers, with two of the customers the relationship ended after several transactions. With four out of eight unwanted customers, the relationship ended in the exploration stage of relationship development (Dwyer et al., 1987). Only dyadic communication existed between parties and trials of the product were seen but failed. With two of the customers, the relationship did not end yet, as deterrents of dissolution were more effective in dissolution decision Respondents stated that they had a dissolution intention but could not end the relationship because of dissolution deterrents’ existence outweighed dissolution motivators/reasons (Dwyer et al., 1987: 14). These relationships were discussed in deterrents of dissolution.

Respondents were asked if they had any definition of unwanted customers in their firm. Some of them said that they had (eight relationships). There were three different groups of relationships. In four relationships, sellers ended the relationship at the beginning because “customers demanding too much customization of products”, “offer cash against goods as mode of payment”, “customers demanding

low quality product” and “customers demanding to be an intermediary in one country where two intermediaries already existed.” In two relationships, sellers had a dissolution intention after a few transactions and they ended it because buyers were from political risk holding country and customers held a “bad debt” (seller’s own word). Besides, in two relationships, there was a dissolution intention of sellers after a few transactions, but they could not end due to deterrents of dissolution. These unwanted customers were low volume buyers who interrupt large production and capricious customers.

As one respondent observed: “Of course we have a definition of unwanted customer, the ones that demand cash against goods as mode of payment. That is, the ones that offer payment after they receive products.” In this example, seller ended the relationship at the beginning of the relationship. Also, one respondent pointed out that: “Yes we have one in England. Customer gives an order but god damn it, we have some customers that we wish them not to give an order and we don’t send. There is a customer group that we do not want to deal with.” The reason of this behavior of seller is low volume buyers who interrupt large production. As these words of seller implied: “That customer will buy one container product in a year, and you will have to interrupt high volume production in order to produce that customer’s low volume order. We do not want to interrupt 1 million units of production to produce customer’s five jars of product.” Another example was given by a manager indicated that:

Once a customer asked me to produce separate shirts for every of his customers’ size. But for every size we have to prepare a new mould. So, I cannot do it. It means preparing separate moulds for every sizes and cutting them one by one. The products’ mould we produced are prepared before and they are standard. For example, L, XL, XXL sizes are available. It is easier to produce number of 300-500 shirts rather than producing one by one.

So, seller did not accept the customer that was demanding too much customization of products since seller was a small-sized firm.

Moreover, one seller ended the relationship at the beginning with the customer that was demanding low quality product. As it was put to the author by the respondent: “We are producing at a certain quality level. When a customer asks us to produce lower quality ceramic, we convey that we cannot. There is a certain quality for cheaper product and this quality level is always preserved. There exists a well-

known quality of this firm, we always aim to increase that level.” Furthermore, one seller also ended the relationship at the beginning with the customer that was demanding to be an intermediary in one country where two intermediaries already existed there. As an informant from automotive parts industry marked: “For example, in Kosovo, we have already two customers. When the third customer asked us to be an intermediary, we decline it and convey that we have two another and he can buy from them. If I sell to him too, others’ market will be destroyed. We have to protect our customers too.”

Also, some respondents explained that they wanted to exit some of their relationships, but decided to continue since deterrents of dissolution made relationships inalienable. That means relationship dissolution deterrents outweighed relationship dissolution motivators (Dwyer et al., 1987: 14). These sellers had a dissolution intention after a few transactions due to political risk of an importer country and customer’s holding a “bad debt”, but could not end the relationship. As the respondent witnessed:

When customer could not clear their payables, there is a term “bad debt” that we use to explain this situation. That means, this customer is not able to pay and there is no need that debt awaiting in firm’s receivables. Firm’s lawyers are now dealing with them to levy by execution depending upon on our conditions of international agreement.

Another seller stated this situation with these words: “There is one customer that we wanted to give up very much however he is so profitable that we cannot.” The reasons lie behind this intent were customer demands including too much customization of products, communication problems in a relationship and unresolved conflict initiated by customer. Seller conveyed this example with these words: “We are talking about a Swiss firm, they are French-speaking and they don’t want a sales people which is English-speaking. They precisely demand a French-speaking sales people that cares about them. They are very capricious and they want to get what they want as soon as possible.”

8.5.2. Exit Management

From the interviews it was found that a seller sought to end three of his relationships due to anticipation of buyer’s payment difficulties in the future, broken

trust and opportunistic behaviours of buyer. Pick (2010) explains that exit management means how to communicate the dissolution to the customer. As it was put to the author by export manager:

We perceived that the customer in Belarus would have payment difficulties due to government's penalty for offshore transaction and started to close open accounts. When they gave an order of € 100,000,000, we said to them that we did not have a stock, and proposed to send an order of € 20,000. We always tried to decrease our transaction with them, we fulfilled their limit. Then we received our payment by installments and we continued to cut the volume of products again.

It is seen from this example that after the decision of dissolution, seller decreased his dependency to seller by cutting the volume of sales and collecting customer's due payment.

In addition, the same seller witnessed an opportunistic behavior of the seller after customer's owners had changed due to acquisition of customer's company. New owners claimed that seller's products were poor quality and behaved opportunistically not to pay for them. So, seller tried to both receive his payment and exit from the relationship. So, seller made the customer send his goods to seller's another customer and succeeded to address this conflict.

Another point is that, exit management required management characteristics of intuition and proactiveness. Another example explained as:

Actually, the foundation of our firm in Bulgaria realized as we anticipated the financial risk and crisis in Europe before. We used to sell products worth € 250,000,000 to one customer in Greece until 2012-2013. Now, they may not buy products even worth € 30,000,000. The reason of this, the money crisis in Greece. We cut our relationship with our Greek customer and make them a customer of our firm in Bulgaria and increased our profitability.

It is important to manage the exit of relationship with other-oriented point of view, in order to refrain from hurting the partner both materially and spiritually (Tahtinen and Havila, 2004: 923). Ending the relationship in a very precise manner, may cause other party to be in a difficult situation.

8.5.3. Customer Recovery Management

Interviews supported that sellers tried to save their troubled relationships, which means they were engaged in customer recovery management activities (Pick,

2010). Some of them succeeded reactivating them after external factor such as economic crisis, political factors such as war, closed border gates of a country disappeared (three relationships). An export manager recalled similar example and explained:

Recently in Yemen, the war broke out, our customer could not buy product as country's border gate was closed. There was one day our products to arrive at Adel port. Customer wanted to receive them but unable to do, after five to six months' we sent them again. Then the situation improved, the problems disappeared and the relationship now continues.

Another example conveyed by respondent:

The economic crisis in Greece where the largest market of our firm and best customers are located in, affected us badly. For six months' time, we were unable to deliver even one box of products. Their banks were closed and accounts were frozen. After November, their banks started to open thanks to the European disbursements and we started to work again.

In addition, in the countries where war continues, sellers point out that they will attempt to win-back lost customers in the future. As it was put to the author by respondent: "Let's think about the existence of war situation. There does not remain much to do about that country as there is a war. But we do our best to preserve our ties and bonds with customers. Because, all the negative situations are temporary, we have to win-back this customer sooner or later." Also, one respondent conveyed that he will succeed the recovery of relationship by decreasing price and profitability as competition was tense. As respondent claimed: "After that period ends, the competition will get harder in the world economy. You will have to decrease your one unit profit to zero point zero two units to continue trade. Provided that if the lost customer did not sign an agreement that abide him and accept you again."

8.5.4. Conflict Management

According to interviews, the most used conflict management style is cooperative style (Freeman and Browne, 2004) which is an other-oriented that considers other party's needs and wants more than its interests (three relationships). This style is low in assertiveness and high in cooperation. As export manager explained:

If the problem is related to us, prices are ignored and air cargos may be used which is in total \$ 10,000. This firm does its best to provide customer satisfaction. There can be some circumstances that we do not accept normally but accept in order to provide customer satisfaction. For these long-term relationships, we sacrifice some of our profits.

Another example is from the same manager, there was a situation that seller accepted several faults even if it is customer's. The words of manager noted as:

"The reason behind this is not to lose high volume project-based customers. If there is something that we can fix and especially it is not discussed with the customer in the beginning, if there is even a small mistake of us and the solution is on our hand, we do our best to solve the problem." Another example of this strategy employment realized as seller tried to satisfy customer with the purchase of new machinery to prevent future mistakes in production. As the respondent claimed: "We bought an X-Ray machine to detect a piece of broken glass in a jar. Customer perceived that we will never let this happen again and trusted our word. Then, we continued to work with them the second year." It is an other-oriented strategy as seller knows that all mistake belongs to them.

Assertive style (Freeman and Browne, 2004) was also used by one of the respondent in the interview which was low in cooperation and high in assertiveness. It is a self-oriented strategy that seller considers its interest more and does not look from customer's point of view. Example of this style was witnessed in refrigeration industry. After the acquisition of customer's company, new owners claimed that seller's products were poor quality and behaved opportunistically not to pay for them. As export manager noted: "We consulted to commercial attaché in that country and asked to calculate costs of this export transaction, they gave us estimated numbers. We talked to customer via attaché and said that they must make this payment." In this example, seller is very assertive to prove that he is right in this conflict and customer is mistaken.

8.6. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

Interviews provided examples of all types of communication strategies in relationship dissolution from Alajoutsijärvi et al.'s (2000) categorization according to directness and orientation (see Table 14). Communication strategies included not

only verbal dissolution intentions, but also non-verbal expressions in the form of behaviours of parties to hide their dissolution intention such as increasing prices, behaving dishonestly and inaccurate and using pretext. Moreover, the selection of communication strategy depends on the interactions of the parties and results of the events (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1285). Besides, there is no specific the most beautiful communication strategy as individuals cannot assume its consequences. If there is a negative event or conflict between parties, they may prefer to employ more self-oriented strategies rather than other-oriented ones. If the relationship had trust, mutual dependency, mutual commitment, tight social bonds and amicable communication before dissolution, parties adopt more other-oriented strategies to save their partner's face or to preserve their reputation in the market. From the interviews, various communication strategies were identified in 66 relationships (see Table 14). 39 of them were indirect communication strategies and 27 of them were direct communication strategies. From indirect communication strategies, 33 of them were silent oriented and six of them were disguised oriented. From direct communication strategies, seventeen of them were revocable oriented and ten of them were communicated oriented. It can be inferred from interviews that in some relationships, more than one communication strategy was used. Some of the respondents changed their communication strategy during the dissolution process according to other party's behaviours.

Table 14. Communication Strategies

Directness	Orientation	Other or Self Orientation	Communication Strategy	Number of Relationships
Direct communication	Communicated	Other-oriented	Negotiated farewell	4
Direct communication	Communicated	Self-oriented	Fait accompli	6
Direct communication	Revocable	Other-oriented	Mutual state-of-the-relationship talk	8
Direct communication	Revocable	Self-oriented	Diverging state-of-the-relationship talk	9
Indirect communication	Disguised	Other-oriented	Pseudo-de-escalation	5
Indirect communication	Disguised	Self-oriented	Cost escalation	1
Indirect communication	Silent	Other-oriented	Fade away	29
Indirect communication	Silent	self-oriented	Withdrawal	4

The most preferred communication strategy was fade away (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000); an indirect communication strategy which is silent and other-oriented with 29 examples from interviews. Both buyers and sellers were observed to be the party that initiated the dissolution. The exporter from previous examples stating that quality certification document is required from Turkish exporters when selling to Iraq, continued with these words: “European countries are paying for that document yearly with convenience, however Iraq does not provide us a convenience. We automatically became a competitor and our profitability decreased, so we are ignoring that market.” In this example, seller decided to fade away from the relationship. Another example of seller’s decision to fade away from relationship was expressed by an exporter with these words: “As we are not able to renew ourselves and it is too expensive to renew the product, we exit these markets, like Germany.” Also bilateral decisions and fade away endings were witnessed in interviews. Furthermore, the reasons of dissolution differed too much. When it seemed pretty obvious and there was no need to talk about the recovery of the relationship, the disengager ended the relationship by simply fading away and other party realized that their relationship was ended and knew why. As it was put to the author by a respondent:

There was no conversation between us about ending our relationship. However, customer did not give an order for one month, then another one month passed and still no order. Their debt remained unpaid and it reached to 1,000,000 TL, so you could not open an order for this customer because the debt was growing apace and customer did not pay it. Of course there was no mistrust about nonpayment of a debt, but it is a must to collect payment for the continuance of this firm, isn't it? So, compulsorily we ended it; if we could receive a little payment, we could continue with this customer otherwise.

Also, in project-based industries such as infrastructure and construction, customer may fade away for a while since there was no project to offer seller or does not want to work with seller anymore. As words of respondent claimed: “Customer was using that project of ours but there is a circumstance that he did not buy the next project from us.” Some respondents from project-based industries also noted that some customers stated their dissatisfaction to them but did not state their dissolution intention. When the restoration attempts of sellers failed, customers faded away after the project completion. Besides, even the conflict between parties was addressed in the restoration stage of dissolution process, one of the parties might decide to exit

from the relationship due to opportunistic behaviors of the other party and their broken trust in the relationship. One export manager witnessed a similar situation, after the acquisition of customer's company, new owners behaved opportunistic and tried to decrease the sold products' price. In the end the conflict was settled but seller's trust was broken. After conveying these, he continued with these words: "The change in customer's owners just ends the relationship between us, it makes us to exit, because every time we have a question mark about new owners." Moreover, some respondents claimed that customers switched to an alternative seller without discussing the reasons with them. It can be inferred from these sentences that due to intense competition, customer exited the relationship without communicating the reasons to seller: "European countries used to buy from Turkey, Poland and nearby countries. Of course when anti-dumping duties were cancelled, Chinese prices started to dominate the market. This event interrupted our sales very much, the competition increased. It was such a competition that it was impossible for us to reach that price levels."

Bilateral endings communicated silently by fading away were seen generally when there was a war, terror or political instability. As one informant pointed out: "The reason was war, border gate was closed. They wanted to order again with cash basis however it was not possible to bring money due to closed borders (in Syria)." According to this seller, the reason of the relationship dissolution is accurate. Economic factors such as crisis or devaluation also caused a bilateral dissolution which was silently communicated as it was an obvious outcome. As one respondent explained: "Uzbekistan started to be unable to buy our products last year. The decrease in oil prices affected them too, since they are dependent on Russia." As it was seen, there was nothing the seller could do to reverse the situation, it was an accurate event that their relationship was over. Furthermore, bilateral ending causing situations like bankruptcy of customer and acquisition of customer's company; more general, the change in other party's business constitutes a reason of fading away communication strategy preference. There was no fade away communication to save other party's face. Furthermore, silently communicated exit fade away may be a revocable dissolution. Interviews claimed one relationship that seller initiated the dissolution was reactivated again. Seller reentered to that market with a new product.

The second most used strategy was diverging state-of-the-relationship talk (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000) which was expressed in nine examples. Diverging state-of-the-relationship talk is also a direct communication strategy with its revocable nature and self-orientation. This strategy was employed by both bilateral endings and unilateral endings. As one export manager put to the author: “Customer asked us to pay compensation due to our fault in production, we said that we would pay if the second fault was realized. They declined this claim and said now that you do not pay compensation, we will not work with you anymore.” The restoration of the relationship was possible and dependent on fulfilling the customer’s request. Another example of this strategy observed from ceramic industry:

We are selling ceramic to a large-sized American customer. When we found a new customer from America, other customer started to behave coquettishly. They said that they were buying from us as much as they can. Asked me why we were selling to another customer too. They asked us to terminate all ties and bonds with other customer, if we didn't they would do.

With eight examples the third one was found to be mutual state-of-the-relationship talk (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000). This strategy is revocable and other-oriented. Majority of respondents claimed that their relationship reactivated after external trigger such as political factors or economic factors or competitor-related factors disappeared. Nearly in all examples of employing this strategy, buyers are the ones that initiated the dissolution. An example of this communication strategy showed that dissatisfied customer gave a chance to restore the relationship but seller was not able to satisfy their needs. As it was put to the author by a respondent: “Our production molds for women’s shirt did not fit the way they asked for. The chest parts of shirts did not fit exactly, so the relationship was over.” Another respondent from packaging industry observed: “Customer comes and you start to do research, you suggest a roller for him. He tries the roller in his production but it does not fit. You send another one and it does not fit either. The relationship ends at the beginning, we have also these kind of relationships...” In some relationships, customer stated that he could not buy in high volume anymore due to economic factors. These kind of relationships’ dissolutions were temporary and the relationship ended mutually. Besides, customers anticipated increasing the volume in the future. As it was put to the author by an informant: “One of our three to four years’ intermediary’s financial situation worsened and their purchases declined by fifty

percent immediately. Do we continue? Yes, but the sales volume decreased abruptly.” Also, one of the respondent explained: “X-Ray machine was required in our production, but we didn’t have it. It was such a problem that we could lose our customer. We think that it is fixed now, we are going to reap the fruits of victory in this year. The relationship continues but with a fifty percent decrease of volume.”

The fourth most preferred communication strategy was *fait accompli* (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000), with six examples from the interview. *Fait accompli* is a direct communication strategy which is self-oriented and communicated. It leads to an irrevocable dissolution, since the initiator party does not give a chance to other party to restore the relationship (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1275). This strategy was employed by both buyers and suppliers. As an export manager expressed: “We started to work with Algeria recently however, now it is an incredibly political risk holding country. I would go this country to sign intermediary agreement with the customer after a couple of weeks, but I canceled my flight ticket and I said to them that I am not coming. Now there is no sense of our presence in that country anymore.”

The fifth most employed strategy was pseudo-de-escalation (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000) with five examples. Pseudo-de-escalation is an indirect communication which is disguised and other-oriented. This communication strategy can be employed by either supplier or buyer. As one export manager recalled:

We perceived that the customer in Belarus would have payment difficulties due to government’s penalty for offshore transaction and started to close open accounts. When they gave an order of € 100,000,000, we said to them that we did not have a stock, and proposed to send an order of € 20,000. We always tried to decrease our transaction with them, we fulfilled their limit. Then we received our payment by installments and we continued to cut the volume of products again.

In this example, it is obvious that seller is planning to exit the relationship but hides this intention by decreasing the volume of transaction. He gradually decreases his dependency on buyer while continuing the relationship. Another example of this strategy: “We were exporting to Egypt but their currency was devalued. So, our euro/dollar exchange rate was damaged. Customer stated that his project was working, but at that moment he could not import due to country’s situation. Customer said that I could import it after five weeks’ time. We said okay and

approved the order.” In this example, customer may be planning to exit the relationship secretly. Another exporter noted that:

Whenever customer gets a better offer or better price, switches to alternative supplier and ends the relationship with you. He said that they won't make a payment this month and they did not answer the phone when we called them. As the relationship has international borders, we could not visit them all the time. When they did not answer the phone or respond to an e-mail, there is nothing we could do.

The sixth ones were negotiated farewell and withdrawal (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000) with four examples of each from interviews. Negotiated farewell is a direct communication which is communicated and other-oriented. It was seen in bilateral endings and buyer-initiated endings from interviews. One manager noted that:

We were working with an English customer, at the beginning everything was fine. The product that we sold to them was of a medium quality. After three years, the breakdown of the product started to occur and buyer's customers started to complain. The buyer's reputation was damaging due to customer's perception about firm, thinking that their products were for high segment market. So, these problems led the customer to stop buying from us despite there was no problem in our relationship.

It can be inferred from this example that the conflict between parties was unavoidable and they could discuss problems in a relationship (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1275). Withdrawal is an indirect communication strategy with self-orientation and remaining silent. According to interviews, both buyers and sellers were the ones that initiated the dissolution in withdrawal strategy. In this strategy, initiator party behaves differently than before to reveal the dissolution intention (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000: 1275). Also, by stating a pretext, disengager did not state the dissolution intention accurately and behaved dishonestly (Tähtinen and Halinen-Kaila, 1997: 573). As one informant noted: “I thought to myself it was not worth the trouble when I started to deal with all the details of the order. I said that I was very busy and we could talk later. He sent me some messages, I kept saying too busy to talk right now, and in the end he understood that I did not want to take that job.” Another example of the adoption of this strategy: “One of our customer cancelled the order since he received a better price. But he tried to make use of various problems as an excuse rather than stating the real problem which was price.”

The least preferred strategy was stated to be cost escalation (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2000) with one example. Cost escalation is an indirect communication strategy

which is disguised and self-oriented. This strategy was used by one export manager to end his two relationships. As it was put to the author by exporter:

My strategy was to launch a firm in Bulgaria, I wanted to enter that market by myself. At the beginning, we hid this intent and started to increase prices gradually. We were selling more than one customers in that market. In three months we marked up the prices of some products for some customers. The reason behind this to make customers understand that we did not mark up the prices for every customer. Also our objective was to make them think we were insincere and to make them terminate the relationship by themselves.

The findings of the interviews reveal that, parties do not intentionally select communication strategies, they select based on course of events in the dissolution process, which justifies the assertion of Giller and Matear's (2001).

8.7. CONSEQUENCES OF DISSOLUTION

From interviews in 39 relationships, negative consequences were noted. Besides, seventeen positive consequences were detected. So, Pick's (2010) assertion of negative consequences are most commonly seen in relationship dissolution is supported with our research. The reason of limited research on consequences is stated by Pick (2010: 105) as lack of knowledge of firms about the consequences on firm and lack of having record of lost customers by sales people as they tend to see dissolution as their failure.

8.7.1. Positive Consequences

Interviews revealed that there were seventeen positive consequences out of 56 consequences (see Table 15). The most implied positive consequence was that reactivation of the relationship is possible as relationship energy (Havila and Wilkinson, 2002: 192) remained even after the dissolution (ten relationships). There were several examples of preserved relationship ties and social bonds between parties after dissolution. One of the respondents explained that: "We can sit and talk with the customer at that moment, exactly the relationship ended bilaterally." As another respondent noted: "There is no problem in our relationship, even we sometimes talk with him, he is a very pleasant person. Unfortunately, we had to

terminate the relationship, it was a big business.” Another example given by a respondent: “But we do our best to preserve our ties and bonds with customers. Because, all the negative situations are temporary, we have to win-back this customer sooner or later.” There was one more example of this concept, a respondent implied that: “Even if the relationship is over, you can come back after a while because personal relations do not end; it is important. Even though the business relationship dissolves, if personal relations continue, the reactivation is possible.” Another respondent observed: “All sellers have different advantages. Customers try them one by one and stay in a relationship that is proper at that moment. As I said, it is very likely that customers come back to our firm after switching to another seller.” Moreover, in episodic relationships, it is less likely to reactivate the relationship. As one respondent explained: “Actually, we do not have any connection with the customers that do not have a project at that moment. It is possible that we have sometime, who knows.” Also, in temporary or partial relationship dissolution, it is more likely to reactivate it in the future as the business relationship continues. As it was put to the author by informant: “Purchasing volume decreased but the relationship did not end. It still continues, a different situation may happen in the future.” So, the results confirmed that the principle of “the conservation of relationship energy” exists, which means that relationship energy endures even after the dissolution and can move and is transferred to another relationship (Havila and Wilkinson, 2002: 192).

Table 15. Positive Consequences (Third Order Theme)

Second Order Theme	First Order Theme	Number of Relationships
Reactivation of the relationship is possible	Remaining relationship energy	10
Chance to improve firm performance	Reentering to target market after developing a new product	1
Chance to improve firm performance	Hiring qualified personnel to serve foreign language speaking countries	1
Resources transferred to other markets	Existing and prospective customers	1
Positive Feelings	Feeling relief and comfort	1
Learning experience	Understanding the importance of the relationship management	1
Learning experience	Finding new ways of selling to the target market	1
Learning experience	Observation of competitors to discover potential customers	1

One of the other positive consequence observed from interviews was relationship dissolution provided a learning experience to firms (three relationships). As it was put to the author by an informant: "In order to maintain good relationships with customers, seller has to control how the relationship is going on, not only specific times, but every time." This sentence showed that seller understood the importance of relationship management. The same informant continued her words: "What can be done, by giving promotion you may give support to customer and provide satisfaction. When the purchasing volume of customer decreased in a certain level, seller should visit the customer and ask the reason behind this drop in orders." Another seller asserted that they pursue competitors' actions as they are effective in deciding to enter new markets. They also said that they monitor the statistics about this issue. Lastly, one seller firm found a way to sell old market. Seller firm started to sell Chinese products by transit trade to European countries. As her words implied: "After Chinese effect on competition, we started to make a transit trade; buying from Chinese firms to sell European countries that accept Chinese products. When we were not able to sell Turkish products to them, we used our connections in China and tried to sell Europe again."

Another positive consequence conveyed by respondents was the chance to improve firm performance (two relationships). One of the respondents takes the chance of improvement by reentering to the same target market after developing a new product. Seller had decided to exit the market due to their old product technology and inability to compete in the market with this product before. After the relationship ended, they reentered to that market with a new product segment. As these words imply: "We started to work with the same customer. We said that the old product of ours was not worth to invest because we did not have sufficient supply of it in Turkey. So, we are able to supply every service with our new product." Another firm that took the chance of improvement decided to hire a qualified personnel to serve French speaking countries after the risk of dissolution in African countries due to competition with China. The reason of risk was not related to lack of French-speaking personnel, but they thought that getting on well with them would be beneficial.

The dissolution of relationship also allows for transferring resources to existing and prospective customers (one relationship). One of the respondents noted: “So, we have decreased the budget that we spend to this market and have started to offer discounted prices to other markets. Automatically we have ceased to sell with the same prices at that market.”

Moreover, the dissolution of problematic relationships provides a feeling of relief and comfort (one relationship). As one of the informants declared: “It was a good decision, because that customer cannot pay more than € 400 in a week to its foreign suppliers this year. So, it was a well-timed action.” In addition, relationship dissolution provides seller an avoidance of customer’s anticipated payment difficulties (one relationship). This example also showed that seller wanted to end the relationship by being proactive. He perceived that the customer would have payment difficulties in the future and ceased to sell them.

8.7.2. Negative Consequences

39 negative consequences were reported in the interviews (see Table 16). The most mentioned negative consequence was that sellers’ obligation of compensating the decrease of sales (eighteen relationships). Sellers cited that they tried to compensate it by seeking for new foreign target markets with similar or different preferences of lost customer (twelve relationships), seeking for a new intermediary in the same target market (two relationships), and seeking for an increase in existing customer profitability (three relationships), and win-back lost customers (one relationship). In order to do that, sellers have to bear costs of exit regardless of the fact that they are disengager party or not. The most mentioned compensation was seeking new foreign target markets. As one exporter noted after the dissolution of relationship with the Russian market: “Not Russia, it is not easy to do business in there for us, so we try to close the gap by seeking for other firms. We also push our existing customers around, the ones that we know that they have a potential in order to get more orders from them. On the other hand, we have to attack new customers.” In this example, seeking for new foreign markets, seeking for an increase in existing

customer profitability were mentioned by the respondent. Another informant declared that:

What we do after dissolution is seeking for different customers plus entrance of different markets, the ones that we have never existed. For example, we go to Iran and do market research there, we make use of other firms' markets in this industry. Rather than dealing with problematic customers, we canalize other markets that have a potential of prospective customers and fight for them. We change our direction.

Another exporter marked that they sought for other markets since the reason of dissolution was economic crisis and any firm in that country was not a viable option. As it was put to the author by exporter about relationship dissolution with the Greek customer: "You cannot find a new customer in that country to replace the lost one because there is a crisis in there, who will buy it? Even if someone buys, money cannot be delivered to us. In that case, we disperse all around the world, attend trade fairs." Also, there were exporters that had to seek for customers in the same target market (two relationships). As one of them marked: "We have to find another intermediary in the same country. So, we go to that market and visit firms conveying that we have this kind of product list and this kind of price list and asked them if they want to buy." The reason behind this, they are working in the form of intermediary, they have one customer in the regions such as Balkan states or Middle Asia. That intermediary purchases in high volume and sell to all customers in this specific region, acting as the representative of seller. Besides, a respondent explained the winning-back of lost customers. As the words of respondent claimed: "Another option is to give a chance to lost customer to be recovered. We can send products with open account and make the customer get a project and provide customer workability, sustainability. Well, sure if they have a potential to work and show sign of life and the relations are not so closed."

Table 16. Negative Consequences (Third Order Theme)

Second Order Theme	First Order Theme	Number of Relationships
Employees affected emotionally	Regret	2
Employees affected emotionally	Conflict between employees due to family relations	1
Employees affected emotionally	Missing the old relationship	1
Employees affected emotionally	disappointment	2
Decrease in the financial performance of the firm	Investment in the relationship is wasted	1
Decrease in the financial performance of the firm	Foreign currency inflow decreased	1
Decrease in the financial performance of the firm	A profitable customer is lost (war), reject a profitable order (political risk)	4
Decrease in the financial performance of the firm	As new machinery is bought to prevent fault in production	1
Decrease in the financial performance of the firm	The forecasted sales are not attained	3
Compensate the decrease of sales	Seeking for new foreign target markets with similar or different preferences of lost customer	12
Compensate the decrease of sales	Seeking for a new intermediary in the same target market	2
Compensate the decrease of sales	Seeking for an increase in existing customer profitability	3
Compensate the decrease of sales	Win-back lost customers	1
Have a dispute to be settled in international court		2
Damaged firm reputation		1
Revising the production programme		1
It takes a long time to take new project		1

The second most mentioned negative consequence was the decrease in the financial performance of the firm. Interviews revealed that several respondents observed the same consequence (ten relationships). As one of the respondent from clothing industry stated: “It caused the shrinkage of export and dollar inflow, I used to receive a high amount of dollars from that customer. I used to compensate my dollar need with these dollars from customers.” The same respondent also mentioned the wasted investment in the relationship. As the words of her implied: “For instance, several cloths remained unsold. Customer used to convey that they would use surplus cloths in other orders when they made me buy more than it required.” Another

consequence was reported to be the forecasted sales remained unattained (three relationships). That manager spelt out: “Everytime, a forecast is prepared by the end of year. It demonstrates how to spend 2016 and 2017; what to expect from that country and how much tonnages to sell. This time, dissolution affects all the prepared budgets.” Another informant claimed: “Although yet we export to 60 countries, losing one firm means that we cannot meet our yearly goals.” Another manager explained a similar situation: “The decrease in sales is as important as the relationship is ended. That is, not only the customer ended the relationship is important, but also the customer decreased the sales volume. Because we have a specific forecast and we drop below the forecast automatically. We have to adjust balance of everything again, this is how it happens in large companies.” Also, losing a profitable customer was reported as an item in this first order theme. As respondent stated: “Abruptly, we were unable to sell product worth 100 tonnes.” Besides, one respondent talked about rejecting a customer order due to political risk affected financial performance of the firm: “When you lost that job, customer switches to another seller and give order to them. It is a big loss in terms of revenue.” Besides, one of the respondent described a similar situation as they had to make a huge investment of fault detecting machinery. As it was put to the author by him:

Our sales volume of 600-700 containers just dropped by fifty percent due to one mistake we made in production last year. So, it affects you negatively, you have to make investment to bring customer the same balance. The costs associated with the required machine amount to € 500,000-€ 600,000. You have to amortize the price of the machine and win-back customer by bringing him to the same level or increasing the volume.

Interviews demonstrated that seller’s employees were affected emotionally from relationship dissolution (six relationships). As it was stated in the sensemaking and aftermath stage of relationship dissolution process section, employees felt regret, disappointment and they missed their old relationships. Also, one firm explained that they had a conflict inside firm. The words of manager displayed that: “According to my father, it meant a disaster, but he accepted to buy cloth in advance. I said to him not to buy cloth that much. He said I should have stopped them. My father does not take a risk, he is not a risk-taker person.” The feeling of regret was accurate when respondent explained the situation: “When customers that are really profitable left the relationship, you feel regret. Of course we are working too hard for our

customers. Finding customers, making them work together and retaining them are really hard task. Then, the customer leaves you in some way..." The feeling of disappointment was described by one respondent: "The customer was one of the group companies of a big group in Italy. It was actually a big disappointment to lose them for our perspective." Missing the old relationship is also explained by one exporter: "Yes, I really wanted to continue the relationship. He was a hard customer actually he was keeping us on our toes. However, he was the most profitable customer of ours ultimately."

Some respondents revealed other negative consequences. One of the respondent working in chicken poultry industry noted that it takes a long time to receive a new project. As he explained: "At least a year should pass in order to convey that we have a brand new project. Actually, the effect of losing that volume of customer is very strong. It takes two to five years to find customers in China or Mexico." Another negative consequence was reported to be damaged firm reputation. One of the respondents explained: "...because these problems related to our firm or customer is heard in the market. They affect us in a negative or positive way. These problems have regional effects. For example, in Saudi Arabia we were in a situation that we could not get an order for a period." Also a firm observed a negative consequence of having a dispute to be settled in international court, which means additional costs were incurred for the firm. Besides, revising the production programme was reported as a consequence of dissolution.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the research was analyzing reasons of exporter-importer relationship dissolution, the process of it and the consequences of dissolution by in-depth face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted with sixteen exporter firms and 67 exporter-importer relationship dissolutions were reported in this study. For the reasons of dissolution and consequences, third, second and first order themes were developed.

According to interviews, in project-based industries especially (e.g. chicken poultry industry, automotive parts industry, infrastructure parts industry); the characteristics of the relationship such as trust, social bonds, commitment, dependency do not exist between parties at Dwyer et al.,’s (1987) exploration stage. This justifies Dwyer et al.’ (1987: 16) suggestion of relationship’s fragility in this stage due to nonexistence of interdependence between parties and lower investment in a relationship. Besides, interviews displayed that trust, commitment, dependency, investment in a relationship are developed within a time. The trust is especially developed based on proper payment of the customer. As Turkish exporters in İzmir generally report to work with developing countries, the trust in a relationship is low at the start of the relationship due to political instability, terror or war. So, sellers prefer mode of payments which are guaranteeing them. For example, cash basis and letter of credit are the most preferred mode of payments in Turkey. After some time passes (relationship duration increases), parties started to depend on each other, mutual commitment and trust are developed. Of course, in long trust relationships, parties start to work with an open account and even open account with 90 days’ deferred payment is accepted. Also, investment made in a relationship increases dependency of parties to each other. Interviews also reveal that, “agreements must be kept” principle is not applicable in business relationships in foreign countries, In Turkey, parties do not end their relationships conveniently as they tend to keep one’s word and obey rules of agreements. Besides, strong personal relations are not sufficient to continue the relationship. If parties do not fulfill their responsibilities written in agreement, the relationship may be ended in spite of tight social bonds.

Developed countries, particularly the Nordic countries, have been the major focus regions of the dissolution research, with developing countries not receiving research attention except few studies conducted in China and Russia. In Turkey, no exporter-importer relationship dissolution study has been conducted. So, this research contributes to the literature of exporter-importer relationship dissolution in a developing country context. The results displayed that Turkish people behave comfortably in business relationships, as they expect that importer firms will be tolerant to firm-related mistakes and will perceive them as a one-off mistake. Another contribution of this research is the holistic perspective of the reasons, the process and the consequences of exporter-importer relationship dissolution. The most important one is analyzing the relationship dissolution within exporter-importer context.

Categorization according to initiator party, according to intensity, according to types of relationships and types of their endings were studied before but, no one displayed all categorizations in one research, supporting with the interviews of exporters. Moreover, this research has provided all the relationship dissolution categorizations mentioned above one by one and providing examples for each of them.

The most referred dissolution category according to initiator party was bilateral ending. In bilateral endings, the most cited reasons were political factors such as war, terror, political instability and economic factors. Buyer-initiated ending followed it. In this category, buyer ended the relationship due to seller's unsatisfactory product, quality problems, seller's fault, and customer service problems. Seller-initiated ending was the third most cited category. The reasons of this category were reported to be customer's fault, unprofitability of customer. The research of categorizing relationship dissolution according to intensity showed that the majority of relationships were ended completely, followed by temporarily ended and partially ended. That means, most of the respondent firms' relationships ended with a certain manner by both parties or by the disengage party. Payment problems of customer, acquisition of customer's company, bankruptcy of customer were reported as reasons of it. However, some firms did not cut all ties, bonds activity links while ending their relationships, as in temporary dissolution disengager had to

decrease exchange transactions for a while due to political and economic factors. When analyzing the types of relationships and types of dissolution, continuous relationships with forced ending was the most referred category. The reasons in this category include competitor-related reasons, economic factors and political factors such as war. In this type, both of them did not want the relationship to be dissolved but external reasons cause the dissolution. Continuous relationship with chosen ending included firm-related and customer-related reasons such as unsatisfactory product of seller. Most of the time, episodic relationships ended within their predetermined time. That means, in project-based relationships, exporters did not let the relationship end before the competition of the project. The reason of this, receiving back the project and ending it includes so much cost. As interviews revealed, project-based working exporters accept several faults when there is a conflict even it is customers'.

In fact, there is a limited research about the categorization of influencing factors and events of dissolution in business relationships such as predisposing factors, precipitating events, attenuating factors and events, and deterrents of dissolution. Majority of them only describe these factors and events without applying them on real business relationships. So, this research presented the categorization of influencing factors and events based on interviews with exporters about their relationships with importers.

Therefore, several researchers investigated the reasons of buyer-seller relationship dissolution by combining influencing factors, precipitating factors and precipitating events and motivators of dissolution into reasons. This research attempts to separate reasons of dissolution and influencing factors and events (predisposing factors and precipitating events, deterrents of dissolution, motivators of dissolution) into different categorizations. Furthermore, covering all reasons into one categorization (firm-related, customer-related, relational/behavioral & structural, external/environment & competitor, other and bilateral ending reasons) was not attempted before including six categories. Another contribution of this research is providing supplier-initiated ending examples from the interviews as this type has not studied much in the literature.

On the other hand, the process of relationship dissolution was studied based on individual customer- bank relationship dissolution or consumer-firm relationship dissolution. Some of the researchers only presented a process model and some of them displayed real case studies/stories of dissolution stages of the process in buyer-seller relationships. This research also analyzed the exporter-importer relationship dissolution process, which presented each stage with real examples.

Relationship dissolution management has not been studied much in the literature. This research separated relationship dissolution management into five sections: the existence of the definition of unwanted customers as organizational relationship termination competence, exit management, customer recovery management, conflict management and communication strategies of relationship dissolution. Interviews showed that the majority of firms do not have a definition of unwanted customers in their firms. This research analyzed communication strategies used in Turkish exporter-importer relationship dissolution.

The consequences of buyer-seller relationship dissolution had not been studied much before. This research broadens both negative and positive consequences based on real exporter experiences in Turkey. The relationship energy concept is supported. Moreover, the assertion of Pick (2010) “negative consequences was seen much more than the positive ones” was supported.

Managerial Implications

The study carries important implications for export executives. Before the operations between the exporter and the importer terminates, export managers, in cases of customer dissatisfaction, can invite customers to show that they have taken precautions. Besides, managers should be aware of good personal relations are not sufficient to preserve buyer-seller relationships. Of course good relations may include certain benefits in a relationship, but it is important to know that counting on good relations is not an effective dissolution deterrent. High investment in a relationship or increased cost of exit may help to preserve relationships from dissolution.

Interviews showed that in many times, the influencing factors and events are observable by export managers. In order to prevent these factors to cause relationship dissolution, managers should be proactive and should count on their intuitions. They should perceive different behaviours of customers that may indicate some problems in a relationship, and take precautions. Restoring actions can be performed to sweep away the motives/reasons of dissolution for customers. This is possible if only customer uses voice to discuss the problems in a relationship. If customer decides not to talk with the seller, that means he/she adopts silent or disguised exit strategy which does not give seller a chance to restore the relationship. When voice is preferred, restoring actions are taken according to reasons of dissolution or influencing factors of dissolution. These restoration attempts include making investment for fixing production problems (e.g. new machine, a high quality product material), conflict management strategies. In order to save the relationship, investment in a relationship and costs of exit should be increased. Because, they create interdependency between partners and make them ignore some motivators of dissolution or problems in a relationship. Also, SIVC usage should be increased by export managers, in order to strengthen their relationships with the customers through market actions and managing customer relationships effectively. This tool also may help to make customers give up dissolution and increase the probability of reactivation of relationship even it is dissolved before. Moreover, in seller-intermediary relationships, intermediaries should be managed well by providing them promotions. Another point is seller should refrain from creating competition between their intermediaries by having more than one or two intermediaries in a narrow market.

When there is a conflict between parties of relationship, the conflict management strategy selection is crucial for the future of the relationship. A cooperative style which is low in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness should be employed to address the problem effectively by managers. This style includes accepting some circumstances that firms normally do not accept and sacrificing some of their profits. The reason behind this, too much costs involved in withdrawal of sold products or project-based jobs. Especially in project-based businesses, the sales volume and the volume of the product is very high. Another point, even if the

conflict between parties is addressed by less assertive conflict management styles, customers may simply fade away from the relationship, especially in project based relationships. Since project-based jobs have long product life cycles such as 10 to 20 years; exporters may not notice that customers have faded away. So, addressing the conflict by cooperative strategies will increase the probability of relationship continuation.

Exit management and conflict management strategy may be affected from cultural variables. Managers should be aware of the cultural differences of the other party and manage these strategies accordingly. As the dissolution communication strategy is perceived based on other party's national culture, the disengager should give accurate signals of dissolution intention by using more direct communication strategies.

Furthermore, managers should know that not every relationship is worth saving. Managers should evaluate the benefits and costs of the relationship before deciding to exit. Also, costs of exit should be evaluated by the disengager firm before the exit decision. After the exit decision is given, export manager should decide which communication strategy of dissolution will be used.

Sellers that have a dissolution intention should decide which communication strategy to use. Actually, the choice of communication strategy is related to the reasons of dissolution. If the reasons of dissolution are external (e.g. competitor-action, political events, economic crisis), then indirect communication is appropriate. If the external reasons are affective in dissolution, managers should accept the dissolution and give time to the partner that affected from external factors. In this situation, parties may fade away or bilaterally decide to end the relationship. Managers should know that revocable and other-oriented strategy (mutual state-of-the-relationship-talk), and silent and other-oriented strategy (fading away) are appropriate in this situation. After negative events have disappeared, one party or both of them may attempt to reactivate the relationship.

In general, if the dissolution decision is related to behavioral (e.g., opportunistic behaviours, unresolved conflict), the dissolution is not revocable. The disengager is very determined to end the relationship as the trust and other characteristics of the relationship were destroyed. Then, self-oriented direct

communication strategy with communicated orientation (fait accompli) will be more appropriate as exporter has no intention to reactivate the relationship in the future. But managers should keep in their mind that exit should be managed carefully in order to refrain from putting the other party in a difficult situation. After the dissolution, the disengager party may provide supply to customer for a while until customer finds another seller. If the disengager thinks that it is possible to address relationship problems and the relationship is worth saving, direct communication strategies with revocable orientation (mutual state-of-the-relationship talk, diverging state-of-the-relationship talk) should be employed.

Sellers and importers should have a definition of unwanted customers. This will provide an organizational competence of relationship dissolution. Firms will be aware of that relationship dissolution is beneficial sometimes. As firms have limited resources, their customer portfolio has a limit. Managers should know how to anticipate unprofitable relationships or unwanted customers and how to exit from these relationships without hurting other party. So, exit management is applied by exporters to end unwanted relationships. The reasons of exit intention can be unprofitability of customer, political risks in customer's country, customer demand with too much customization of products, communication problems in a relationship and unresolved conflict initiated by customer. Another way of refraining from unwanted customers is to reject working with them at the beginning.

As relationship dissolution provides a learning experience to exporters and importers, managers should learn to perceive the obscure dissolution intention signals. Having information about relationship dissolution reasons and influencing factors and events of dissolution and dissolution process, managers can take precautions and take restoring actions before the relationship dissolved or make preparations to exit. If the decision is to exit from the relationship, a decent management of relationship dissolution should be applied in order to minimize the damage of it on the other party and the connected network.

Some negative consequences of dissolution such as compensating the decrease of sales, may incur some additional costs for managers as they will seek for new foreign target markets or try to win-back lost customers. However, learning from these experiences may decrease negative consequences of the future

relationship dissolution. So, relationship dissolution should be seen as a valuable lesson for employees in a firm. Besides, recording every detail about the dissolved relationships in the past may enable export managers to decide how to communicate the dissolution intention to the partner, how to end the problematic relationship and how to preserve existing relationships from dissolution.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One of the most important limitations is the sampling method used: convenience sampling. As the sample of this study was selected by a volunteer basis of firms, the purposive firms were contacted before to increase the number of sample easily. So, random sampling method usage (covering all cities in Turkey) may help to increase the representativeness of Turkey. Another limitation is the narrow sample; only exporters in İzmir were the target population of the sample. Including other cities of Turkey in research may increase the generalizability and representativeness of the sample. Another limitation, personal interviews were only conducted with exporters. So, the interviews may be biased by exporters' perceptions of reasons, consequences. Other parties may perceive the situation differently, since people perceive events from their point of views. As the author counts on the reliability of respondents' answers, they may not reflect the truth for hundred percent. So, adopting dyadic perspective of relationship dissolution will be helpful to decrease biased answers of the respondents and decrease biased point of view. Besides, the firms reported are generally small and medium-sized firms, there are some large-sized firms either. Integrating large-sized firms more to the sample may enable to obtain more accurate results and help to increase number of samples.

According to Freeman and Browne (2004), Western and Asian businesses adopt different dissolution communication strategies based on effects of culture. So, the dissolution of business relationships in diverse cultures should be studied more to ease the management of the dissolution process. Most of the research about buyer-seller relationship dissolution is based on Western theories and practices. The relationship dissolution studies in Western cultures do not help to understand other cultures. More diverse cultural investigations must be applied in relationship dissolution.

Furthermore, a proper categorization of reasons and influencing factors of dissolution and process should be provided since prior studies are too dispersed. Consequences of dissolution are also not studied much. The impact of dissolution on both parties and their connected network also requires more research. Also, a longitudinal research must be conducted to understand the whole effects on firms since the effects are not visible as soon as the dissolution is realized. In the literature, export withdrawal consequences were studied well with the exploratory research. Longitudinal studies were also provided by researchers to display what firms did after export withdrawal. Besides, qualitative methods seem to be used more by researchers. So, more quantitative studies are required in order to support previous studies' unsupported hypotheses (Ping, 1993; Ping, 1995; Ping, 1999; Giller and Matear, 2001; Purinton et al., 2007).

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