A Qualitative Study of Networking in SMEs

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Abstract: Many studies of small and medium sized firms have recognised that the networking activities of small business owners are key determinants of organisational success. Moreover, network theory is becoming increasingly popular as a means of describing marketing in SMEs, stemming from the growing recognition that traditional marketing theories are somewhat inappropriate to the small firm. Of the research carried out to date, however, the greater part has employed quantitative methods and current thought is that the concepts of networks and networking could be better investigated using more qualitative methods. This paper describes a qualitative study which aims to discover how SME owner-managers' networking contributes to marketing decision making. The study was designed to allow key marketing themes to emerge with relatively few constrictions and issues relating to the motivations and outcomes of networking are described.