



A Mixed Method Exploration of Building Network Ties in the Apparel Industry

Nancy J. Miller, Carol Engel-Enright, and Kayna Hobbs,
Colorado State University

Small-sized apparel manufacturing businesses who operate apparel design, development, and production businesses often experience inadequate knowledge in navigating the complex apparel industry. Key concepts in social capital theory suggest that social interactions and people-oriented organizational cultures advance knowledge sharing and network ties. This mixed method exploration of small-sized Colorado-based apparel manufacturers sought to address the research question: Is external knowledge available, and if so, do aspects of social capital play a role in the process? Study 1 involved a qualitative investigation with interviews and business documents suggesting low levels of knowledge sharing, and challenges in learning aspects of the industry. For Study 2, a quantitative analysis was conducted using stepwise multiple regression with independent variables measured by Likert-like scales involving knowledge absorptive capacity, social interaction, and people-oriented organizational culture. Network ties was the dependent variable. All three variables significantly explained networking ties. Exploratory findings provide both theoretical and pragmatic applications.

