

“Small and Micro Business Issues in Barbados: Investigating the Contingent Environment”

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ABSTRACT

The lack of competitiveness of businesses in the Caribbean is a cause for concern. The future of the Caribbean competitiveness will undoubtedly involve the accepted benefits of small-scale production. However the potential of small business does not appear to be realised. The following paper represents the results of a recent survey undertaken in Barbados between the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 and subsequent case studies. It demonstrates that the main issues that need to be addressed are at several levels, no single entity can achieve success alone. The main issues include a lack of co-operation between businesses and between businesses and support organisations, as well as employee issues and government activity.

Following an analysis of survey results, a number of pertinent issues are investigated at the level of the firm.

Key Words: Small business, micro business, critical realism, globalisation

1. Introduction

Globally, and of specific concern to the island states of the Caribbean, small enterprise development and export promotion have been touted as beneficial to economic growth and economic development. Implicitly attached to these issues are elements of innovation, niche marketing and entrepreneurial development. However, policies, strategies and programs to promote such cannot be supplanted unchanged from one socio-economic environment to another. There is a need to closely examine the specific contingent circumstances within each socio-economic sphere in order to achieve any level of success.

For example, if entrepreneurial development is considered as beneficial to economic development it must be established whether such a culture exists. Existing programs to finance entrepreneurial ventures will fail to succeed sufficiently if there is no demand for such programs. In basic economic 'speak'- supply needs to address demand. The results of the research undertaken appear to demonstrate a gap between what is demanded and what governmental and non-governmental support programs are supplying.

The following study investigates the specific contingent circumstances of a selection of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the manufacturing sector in Barbados. The rationale for the study emerged from a recent exploratory survey of businesses in Barbados. The survey identified a number of concerns and issues among MSE decision-makers that were thought to have a direct impact on the development of the MSE sector and consequently the development of an outward (export) orientation. These and other issues are outlined in the next section.

Although the paper adopts a case study approach, individual cases are not addressed in detail. Instead, a number of the main issues to emerge will be discussed. The rest of the paper will be structured as follows. Initially, there will be a brief background on the importance of MSE development. Following this the main results of the recent questionnaire survey will be examined to highlight the main issues that were subsequently examined in greater depth through the case study element of the research.

In Section 4 the main results at the enterprise level will be examined, followed by an examination of the main issues to emerge.

As an aside, but however of crucial importance, the businesses investigated in this research were manufacturing establishments. This is due to a belief that without a strong, vibrant, competitive and dynamic manufacturing sector in the Caribbean, the level of development will always be retarded by a over-dependency on larger economic units (nation states and large multi-national corporations (MNCs)). The service sector is important, and has its own idiosyncrasies, however, unless the Caribbean nation states can utilise productive skills and produce and add value via manufacturing, their development path will always be characterised by over-dependency. To lose the skills of visible production would indeed leave the region vulnerable. This concentration on manufacturing is not to say that the implications of the research rest squarely with the manufacturing sector.

2. MSE Development and Export Promotion

In this age of globalisation, developing states have been pushed to encourage MSE development and adopt an outward orientation in order to survive, and for some even prosper. The rationale

behind this push is centred on several theoretical and practical trends evident in modern society. The multi-faceted rationale for the concentration on small business enterprises within the current research stems not only from global trends that are enhancing the importance of small business, but also from a policy-making perspective where the micro/small business enterprise has been recognised as a means to alleviate poverty, generate employment, and supply goods to society that are not economical for large scale production (White, 1999). In addition, it is also recognised that small business has direct implications for the development of entrepreneurship skills, the utilisation of indigenous resources and the promotion of labour-intensive ventures (Tewarie *et al.*, 1997). All of these issues are important for the Caribbean.

In addition to these issues, the changing structure of the global economy provides a more important role for the MSE. This is as recognised by Dunning (1995) as a trend towards new forms of contractual agreements, which he terms ‘alliance capitalism’, based on the promotion of co-operative competition. Dunning (1995) believes that:

‘...yesterday’s commercial behemoths are tomorrow’s dinosaurs. The reasoning behind this assertion that ‘small is beautiful’ is that modern production methods, accelerating technological advances, more demanding consumers and the growing importance of services are all eroding the advantages of large plants based on a continuous, scale-friendly and relatively inflexible production system.’ (p.470)

As these trends continue, a greater economic role for small business as a whole can be expected. Indeed, in Barbados over two-thirds of firms in the Barbados Industrial Census conducted in 1994 (Barbados Statistical Service, 1996) had less than 26 employees, a trend seen in many other countries world-wide (Lashley, 2001).

3. Survey of Barbadian Businesses

The following presents the main results from a survey of 146 manufacturing enterprises in Barbados between October 2001 and February 2002. Of this number, 42 were micro-enterprises¹, 58 were small-enterprises² and 40 were categorised as either medium or large³. Medium/large firms were utilised in the sample for two reasons. Firstly, the unavailability of data on firm size to enable a specific targeting of micro- or small-enterprises, and secondly, it was believed that including larger firms in the sample would provide a useful means of comparison as regards the main characteristics and issues between the different groupings.

3.1 The Survey Background

For the current survey, the Barbados Manufacturers and Service Companies Directory 2000 (BIDC, 2000) was used to construct the initial database of manufacturing companies. For the reasons stated above only manufacturing firms were selected. The informants were named contact persons from the directory in the majority of cases and included owners or senior managers. A questionnaire administered by a trained researcher was used to gather the required data.

The main aim of the survey was to obtain background information on:

- Firm Character (age, legal form, number of employees, recent changes, competition, management and production style, capacity utilisation and the use of support organisations)
- Decision-makers

¹ Microenterprises are defined here those employing 5 or less persons

² Small enterprises are defined here as those employing between 6 and 20 persons

³ Medium/large enterprises are defined here as those that employ more than 20 persons

- Competition Issues
- Location of Customers and Suppliers
- Exporting Activity (mode, export/sales ratio, destination, prompts, and problems)
- Importing Activity
- Problems Experienced and Needs, and
- Perceptions of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)

The survey attempted to reach 371 enterprises of which 225 were contacted. Of these 225 enterprises, 146 responded, 22 were not interested, 13 had not fully completed the questionnaire, 18 were no longer in operation and 25 were not contactable. This equated to an 81% response rate for enterprises that were contacted and still in operation. The main issues to arise from the survey and examined in greater depth through the case studies are outlined below.

3.2 Main Issues Arising

There are several issues that have been shown to be important in the operation of the enterprises surveyed. The following information stems from the micro and small enterprises in the survey.

In terms of changes in the last two years there appears to be an element of stasis, where the majority of organisations have experienced little growth in profits, turnover or employees. The main issues to emerge are outlined below.

Mode of Competition. The majority of enterprises in the sample appear to only compete through the quality of their product (55.2%). It appears that the provision of a quality service is somewhat less utilised as a competitive tool. In addition to this, only 14.5% competed via price or cost.

Use of Support Organisations. There appears to be a severe lack of co-operation or networking among enterprises in the sample where few utilise membership organisations or support schemes and even fewer have explicit linkages with other firms. Case studies have shown that this lack of use is not only due to a lack of knowledge of the existence of support schemes, but is also due to suspicion because of previous negative experiences, a perception that the relationship between non-governmental organisations and government is far from autonomous, as well as a belief that many support organisations are currently irrelevant or too expensive to join. The view has been voiced that the support organisations do not appreciate the specific needs of particular businesses (especially smaller enterprises) and therefore this has led to a lack of participation.

Domestic Orientation. There appears to be a restrictive focus among enterprises that constrains them to domestic market operation. This is in terms of customers, competitors and suppliers. Whether this is due to competitive pressures that restrict new directions for the business or due to a lack of competencies, are important issues that need to be understood. In addition to this, information flows on market opportunities needs to be facilitated as this has been cited as a major problem by exporters in the sample.

Enterprises that do export still have a regional focus in terms of CARICOM. Little advantage is taken of non-CARICOM territories as well as extra-regional destinations. These non-CARICOM markets are where these businesses will be able to take advantage of niche marketing and differentiation to a greater extent due to their similarities with other CARICOM territories. Overall the constraints presenting these businesses in terms of exporting are cost and information related. This is especially in relation to the export and import problems cited which include

duties and levies, freight costs, port costs and paperwork, as well as the problem of attaining information on markets.

Regional Integration. The perception of the effect of the CSME is at best non-negative. A large proportion of respondents believes that the trend to regional integration will not effect profits, turnover, or employees. However, whether this is due to apathy, ignorance or belief in the strength of their business will need to be established, for if these perceptions are due to apathy or ignorance, the success of the CSME will surely be hampered.

The above summary of results show that there is a distinctive need to increase international orientation, increase linkages between enterprises and between enterprises and support organisations, as well as demonstrating that there is a distinctive role for government to reduce the costs of international operation. The specific issues that are leading to these current problems are analysed through the case study element of the research in order to ascertain the specific changes to the system that will need to be made.

The lack of success in achieving competitiveness by the MSE sector in Barbados is not due to managers or government alone. The situation is complex and must be appreciated as so. As the blame is spread, so shall the solution. In investigating the various environs, it can be seen that factors in both the internal and external contingent environments have influenced the current position of the MSE sector.

The micro/small business community does not have the ability to influence the overall path of globalisation or the actions of the WTO, however they do have the power to influence government and the manner in which they conduct themselves. In addition, the powers that lie at the level of structure, those influences that cannot be observed directly also need to be addressed. From an analysis of respondents, various case studies, and other research undertaken (Lashley, 2002, Lashley and Lord, 2002), there appears to be a multitude of structural factors that are influencing the lack of competitiveness in the micro/small business sector. These structural influences have permeated through both the internal and external contingent environment where government actions, regional integration efforts and business operations are all guided in certain directions by these unobservable phenomena. The main elements of the underlying structure in the Caribbean, and also borne out in the current survey, include a capitalist style of production which rejects the 'alliance capitalism' proposed by Dunning (1995) and has led to the lack of co-operation among enterprises.

These structural factors, and their influence on the external contingent environment have led to the current situation in the internal contingent environment where entrepreneurs are domestically orientated, and resist the use of linkages with other entrepreneurs and support organisations. This is mostly due to suspicion and a lack of appreciation of the benefits of such co-operation. Other problems that they experience due to structure are demonstrated by the problem of lack of access to finance. This is a structure of historical legacy where the financial system in Barbados in particular has grown out of its colonial past where finance was mainly provided to plantation agriculture, and large importing/exporting merchants. The lack of risk in these approaches has led to the current situation where the financial sector appears unwilling to take risks on smaller

enterprises. The authoritarian actions of government are however not blameless. The suspicion by entrepreneurs of support schemes is mostly due to the overt use of such policies for political gain, both spatially and sectorally. However, although institutional advances have occurred, excessive influence by government is still seen (Lashley and Lord, 2002).

Overall the main emerging themes that warranted deeper investigation included the following:

- Reaction to the level of non-manufacturing costs
- Nature of problems with employees
- Nature of financing problems
- Knowledge of support schemes/organisations
- Use of support schemes/organisations

These issues are examined below.

4. Results of Case Studies

The case study procedure involved two main elements, a review of the main responses to the original questionnaire survey, with background information on the enterprises involved, and a series of open-ended interviews with decision-makers.

During the interviews the main issues to emerge from the survey were discussed. The case study process was utilised to investigate the reasoning behind the responses to the questionnaire. The main results of the case studies are highlighted below, including background of the sixteen (16) enterprises chosen at random from the original database, complemented by some of the 'richer' information to emerge from the interviews.

Despite previous case study research that demonstrates that enterprise age, and age of decision-makers does have an influence on observed outcomes (Lashley, 2001), the present research did not show any significant differences in results based on age of the enterprise or age of decision-maker(s). The companies included in the case study element of the survey were founded between 1971 and 1997 and there appeared to be a relative consistency in views on the main issues investigated. Initially however the main characteristics of the case study enterprises are examined.

In terms of the legal form of enterprise, five (5) were sole proprietorships, three (3) were partnerships, four (4) were limited liability, and three (3) were incorporated under the Companies Act.

Only 5 of the 16 enterprises employed anyone part-time, while the number of full-time employees ranged from 1 to 16. In looking at turnover, all of the firms stated it was less than BDS\$2 million, while 10 of the 16 had turnover less than BDS\$500,000. In considering these variables, all of the enterprises in the sample can be considered small by the Government of Barbados' definition as outlined in the Small Business Act (Government of Barbados, 1999).

In terms of recent changes, half of the enterprises experienced a decline in profits over the previous two years. This was accompanied by a similar decline in turnover and employees. Of the firms that exported, over one-half (8 of 13) had experienced no change in exports over the period 2001 to 2002, a trend similar to that seen in product range and capital investment.

The most disturbing of the results to emerge, and discussed in greater depth below, is the lack of utilisation of business organisations and support schemes provided by government and NGOs.

Only 3 of the 16 firms were members of the local manufacturers association, while none of the case study companies were a member of the local chambers of commerce. However, on a more encouraging note, nearly half of the enterprises were a member of the Small Business Association, although a high level of inactivity was seen.

In terms of the utilisation of support schemes, less than a third of enterprises had utilised the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation for technical support, and only one enterprise had managed to gain financial support from FundAccess, a provider of training, technical support and finance for small enterprises in Barbados.

In addition, none of the exporters in the sample had utilised assistance available through the Export Guarantee Scheme and none of the enterprises had utilised any of the other support schemes available to businesses in Barbados such as training grants or concessions available through the Small Business Act. This lack of networking and 'bridging' social capital is one of the main issues that were investigated via the case study interviews.

In terms of some of the more qualitative company characteristics, some interesting, and concerning, trends have emerged. Management and production styles appear to be acting as a constraint to proactive business development. Management are suffering a constraint in dedicating time to any form of strategic/proactive planning due to a tendency to be 'hands-on' in their management of production workers. In looking at the motivation for such actions there

seems to be a desire to firstly, “still hold onto the reins” of the organisation, and secondly, there appears to be a belief among decision-makers that workers constantly need to be ‘pushed’ to get the job done. This is especially seen with the desire not to give employees any autonomy due to their lack of motivation.

As far as production styles are concerned, there appears to be little attempt to change from the standardised work and production processes that are currently being utilised. However, although employees have been blamed for having an aversion to change, management also appear unwilling to risk changing from the status quo. There is little attempt to differentiate from an industrial norm in terms of both process and product. Despite one of the advantages of small enterprises being the ability to create niches, demonstrate flexibility, and specialise, many of the enterprises appear to be adopting process and production techniques of larger enterprises, despite their inability to achieve economies of scale. This is also seen in a lack of activity in new product development, mostly cited as due to a lack of time- time that is being spent supervising and training employees.

In looking at this lack of dynamism and proactivity, it is not surprising that these manufacturers in this era of globalisation cite other local firms as their main competitors (10 of 16) in a highly competitive market, and that their main customers are also local. The time constraint mentioned above and a lack of easily available market information are seen by decision-makers as two of the main constraints. However, non-manufacturing costs have also been mentioned on numerous occasions as a severe hindrance to the firms’ competitiveness in the regional or international market due to the cost burdens that have to get passed onto consumers.

However, despite this lack of an outward orientation, many of the case study enterprises imported their main source of supply (9 of 15), with the primary source being the USA. Although the issue was not originally addressed specifically in the interviews, in discussing the cost issue with decision-makers there appears to be a great deal of rent-seeking behaviour among local suppliers. This is demonstrated by the comments from one general manager that he might as well import production inputs from the USA because to purchase a similar item from a local supplier would probably only save 5% on cost, but for a lesser quality product. The manager put this down to the fact that although Barbadian suppliers can produce some inputs at a much lesser cost, they know the import price of a good from the USA (including duties, levies, transport costs and insurance) and apply a discount to this price rather than a price reflective of the true cost of production. Despite this discount the manager however still imports from abroad due to its better quality.

This trend is reflective of the lack of co-operation among local businesses demonstrated from the original survey. It demonstrates a lack of understanding of the benefits of networking and co-operative competition in providing benefits to all.

Other problems experienced by importers include lack of information on sources, excessive paperwork, port charges, transport costs and a high level of duties and levies. In terms of problems experienced in the export market, these include a lack of information on potential markets, payments by customers, paperwork, transport costs and the financing of the export process.

One of the last issues investigated was problems experienced in the operation of the individual business. Although many of the employee variables from the original survey demonstrated that there was a high level of satisfaction, discussions have seen employee issues emerge as one of the main operational problems experienced by the case study firms. These issues are examined in turn below.

PROBLEM: Locating suitable employees

The majority of firms in the sample remarked that locating suitable employees was a problem that they experienced, though not a serious problem. The main difficulty was locating employees with specific training relevant to the business. However they hoped to overcome this by internal training of younger employees. One director remarked that the ideal scenario would be to employ younger persons and train them internally as older persons still retained a resistance to change. In addition to the desire to train internally, some directors noted the lack of good quality training facilities available externally.

PROBLEM: Ease of hire/fire to accommodate changes in demand

Although many decision-makers responded to this issue as not a problem initially, discussions revealed that employees, supported by the law and union activities have been costly to the enterprises in relation to severance and sick leave. It was noted that many employees, mostly older employees, believe they are owed a job, and that in relation to sick-leave, employees view this as owed to them, whether they were sick or not.

PROBLEM: Productivity of employees

Decision-makers have noted that the above belief, that employees believe that they are owed a job is severely restricting the productivity of workers. It is also felt that unions and lawyers are supporting such attitudes and that this has subsequently led to high costs to the organisation. One director has noted that he does not consider labour costs excessive, but it is the attached costs of sickness, absenteeism and lateness that are the major headaches to the productive operation of the company. The director quotes these costs, in monetary terms and in terms of retarding the generation of a team spirit as a “*mega, mega, mega*” problem. Due to such a headache the director has installed an incentive scheme to encourage attendance at work.

In addition to these issues, the resistance to change by employees is also constraining productivity growth. It appears that employees do not see change as a natural evolution of the business in order to survive, instead change is viewed as ‘more work’ rather than as a guarantee of future employment if the business survives. There appears to be a lack of appreciation that the success of the business means continued employment, which is embodied in a lack of company spirit. However, the blame may not be directed specifically at the employees, for management and owners need to demonstrate to employees that they too have a stake in the success of the business, and there is an obvious need to construct a reward scheme with this in mind.

PROBLEM: Attitude of employees/ PROBLEM: Motivating employees

The above two problems are inextricably linked. Attitudes and motivation appear to be a severe problem to productivity growth. Some of the most often mentioned attributes of employees by

employers are inflexibility, lack of team spirit, and a belief that they are 'owed a job'. It was noted by one managing director that employees do not realise that their "*culture [work ethos] needs to change 'cause times change*". The same director reflected that union attitudes are contributing to such a culture. He believed that unions have outgrown their original uses and that they need to rethink their approach. The director commented that employees have the basic rights that the unions were originally fighting for, and that the unions should now focus on ensuring health and safety, and insurance for workers, as well as assisting in raising the awareness of staff as to the implications of the changing global environment to their continued employment.

PROBLEM: Operating costs

In terms of actual operating costs (excluding taxes, levies etc.) the main problem to emerge from the case studies was a dissatisfaction with the cost of supplies. One manager specifically deals with smaller suppliers whenever possible as he believes that the larger suppliers are "*taking a rip*", with no consideration of the knock-on effects of high cost supplies. This point was raised several times where the bigger suppliers were making 'super-high' profits and that they thought they could continue to get away with it as the suppliers realised "*people are used to it*".

The other biggest operating cost problem was as mentioned above with the problem of sickness and absenteeism. As noted by several managers, the business not only has to pay the sick leave money to the employee, but also has to pay someone to cover, doubling the price of the specific job.

PROBLEM: Tax and Business Levies

Despite these problems in terms of operating costs, one of the biggest sources of displeasure is the burden of corporation taxes, value-added tax, import duties, and in personal terms, income tax. The consensus among decision-makers was that they felt they were paying twice or three times for the same thing in terms of VAT, PAYE, and corporation tax. They did not in general feel that the costs would be excessive if they could see the benefits in terms of infrastructure and relevant support mechanisms, especially in terms of 'world' class training facilities.

PROBLEM: Access to finance

Access to finance has often been touted as one of the major constraints in MSE growth (Lashley and Lord, 2002). However, the case study companies did not reveal any consistent view on this matter. One of the few areas of consistency revolved around the attitude of banks as regards speed of service. It was noted on a few occasions that the commercial banks are quick to chase companies who approach overdraft limits, but slow to respond to enquires or applications. In general the enterprises saw the only option for finance as the commercial banks but were only vaguely aware of other opportunities for both debt and equity finance from alternative sources. This lack of knowledge of alternative sources is mirrored by the lack of knowledge/awareness of support schemes. This has been attributed to a lack of marketing by the schemes, where it was noted that they appear hidden away by government. For those schemes that directors were aware of, too much bureaucracy was attributed to as the reason for a lack of utilisation.

The main recommendations from decision-makers to emerge from the survey in this regard are:

- Equal treatment: would like to have the same concessions as offered to other businesses (large and foreign enterprises)
- Great need for improved, and quality, training facilities
- Need for more advertising of support schemes with a related reduction in bureaucracy

Overall the main themes to emerge from the case study research are threefold. Firstly there appears displeasure with employees in terms of attitude, motivation and realisation of the importance of business success to their continued employment. Secondly, there is dissatisfaction with government on two levels, including what is felt as excessive taxation, and a lack of promotion/advertisement of available support schemes. Lastly, and related to the above points, is the lack of the utilisation of support schemes and support organisations.

5. Main Emerging Themes and Conclusions

To enhance enterprise development and promote an outward orientation by small businesses, governments will play a critical role in providing the appropriate enabling environment. However, both employers and employees need to realise that they have a role to play as well. Employers will need to realise the benefits of co-operative competition and networking, while employees must realise the stake they have in the success of the business. If this is not realised it is the role of the employer to ensure that employees benefit from their labours and are allowed a stake in the development of the business.

It has been established that for the Caribbean to prosper there is a need to increase the export orientation of businesses. However, the current research has demonstrated a number of

constraints to this. Firstly there is the lack of managerial time dedicated to strategic planning due to a 'hands-on' approach by management and a lack of motivation by employees. In addition, the lack of networking and use of support organisations is precluding a greater awareness of opportunities at home and abroad. Government will have a critical role to play here in enhancing this awareness as well as reducing the cost of international operation.

Overall the research has touched on several themes, the three most important of which are shown above, the need to increase international orientation, a need to increase linkages between enterprises and support organisations, and the need for government to reduce the cost of business operation.

It can be seen that underlying structural issues have influenced actions and situations in both the external and internal contingent environments. For example, the lack of international orientation by the businesses in the case studies may not merely be due to a lack of vision, but can also be related to a lack of time to dedicate to such ventures due to 1) a lack of trust of employees to do their jobs correctly, 2) a desire to retain as much control of the businesses as possible, and 3) securing support from government/support organisations is too time consuming. In ameliorating these type of problems there is a distinctive need by both government and entrepreneurs to realise that they are in a global market place and that actions need to be taken to facilitate a strategic approach to coping with it.

International orientation needs to be increased, and not only will governments need to facilitate this by reducing the cost of international operation, they will also need to let the businesses

concerned know about the opportunities open to them for expansion or consolidation. Entrepreneurs will need to realise where the advantages of being small lie, and direct resources towards these areas. The utilisation of standardised procedures and products are not the areas where increases in competitiveness will be seen. The differentiation of the Barbadian 'product' needs to be taken advantage of.

In addition to this, entrepreneurs will need to realise that small size does not necessarily have to be a disadvantage. The nurturing of synergies between businesses and with support organisations can lead to a force that is greater than the sum of its parts. Competition is good, however for small nation states such as Barbados, co-operation must be seen as the way forward. It has been established that there are many issues important to realising the potential of these micro/small enterprises in Barbados. However, one needs to look at the overall context. Caribbean development will not be dependent solely on the success of 'big' business, services and inter-government co-operation. The success of Caribbean development will rest *also* with the development of the MSE sector and their provision of a dynamic and flexible sector to the various Caribbean economies. Therefore the perceptions and actions of the decision-makers in these establishments will be an important driving force in the development of the CSME. These perceptions will need to be enhanced and based upon reliable information.

If the CSME is to be successful, and the Caribbean is to allocate itself an important role in the global economy, the perceptions and actions of these decision-makers will need to be positive, co-operative, and flexible, perhaps mirroring other co-operative success stories as seen in Italy

(industrial districts for small enterprises to promote co-operative competition) and Japan (subcontracting co-operation between small and large firms).

One of the greatest hindrances here will be facilitating a co-operative culture, not only between support organisations and business, but also between businesses and across national boundaries between the 'small' nation states of the Caribbean. Facilitating co-operation across national boundaries will undoubtedly be the most difficult prospect, as it appears that the entrepreneurs in the survey view other Caribbean businesses as competitors rather than as potential allies or partners.

In addition to this, 'smallness' has also been seen as a weakness in the Caribbean and used as an explanation for the 'vulnerability' experienced. Taking a page from organisational studies that see the benefit of small business, and flexibility, these Caribbean nations need to exploit the benefits of smallness if co-operation is to be facilitated and the concept of 'smallness' de-stigmatised.

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