Title of Article: An Exploration of the links between Theory and practices of Relationship Marketing and Small Business
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Abstract: Small firm marketing practices have been assessed in the context of existing models based on large firm practices. Probably, this is the reason why small firm marketing practices have generally been criticized as non-traditional, informal, short-term, and non-strategic. However, given that the marketing discipline is undergoing a transformation in some part of African countries with new paradigms emerging as relationship marketing, it is now appropriate to assess small firm practices in a broader and more contemporary perspective. To this end, this paper examines the links between the theory and practices of marketing and small business. The review of literature highlights the close association of more advanced conceptualizations of marketing, especially relationship marketing, and those of small business, particularly entrepreneurial small business. Given these theoretical similarities, the research question is posed, how does an appreciation of these links aid the researcher’s understanding of entrepreneurial practices? The question is addressed by employing a participant observation method to create a case study of one small rural firm and by inductive analysis techniques. The findings show that it is difficult to distinguish the practices of relationship marketing from entrepreneurial action. This leads one to suggest that it may be useful to reconsider relationship marketing as an aspect of entrepreneurship.