

THE INFLUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE ON KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION: CONCEPTUAL PAPER PROPOSITION

Tamma Elhachemi

School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia
Elhachemi.im@gmail.com

Abstract: *Forming international joint ventures becomes an important vehicle for firm that unable to access knowledge by themselves, therefore, entering international joint ventures (IJVs) is to acquire necessary capabilities by gaining access to foreign MNCs' resources, knowledge, and skills. Drawing upon the intensive literature on knowledge acquisition and strategic alliances, this conceptual paper aims to present potential determinants and outcomes of IJVs' knowledge acquisition through recommending a two-fold conceptual framework to be tested empirically in future studies. The suggested framework proposes knowledge management practices that link to IJVs' knowledge acquisition. These will, in turn, lead to IJVs' competitiveness. To support and justify the suggested framework, literature reviews and methodology are presented.*

Keywords: *knowledge acquisition, knowledge management practices, competitiveness, international joint venture.*

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1. Introduction

Increasingly, firms are finding that one of their most critical assets is knowledge-based (Thuc Anh & Baughn, 2013). Knowledge is an indispensable organizational resource capable of increasing productivity, fostering growth and ensuring the survival of business enterprises (Szulanski, Ringov, & Jensen, 2016). The development and management of knowledge assets constitutes a substantial basis for competitive advantage and has been found to be a key determinant of firm performance (Grant, 1996). However, not all companies have the necessary information and knowledge to effectively manage their business. In this scenario, one context that offers possibilities for access to, and for the assimilation of, knowledge is a strategic alliance. Of course, some forms of alliance are more appropriate for simply accessing knowledge but others, such as joint ventures (JV) are well suited for learning and acquiring the knowledge provided by a partner (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2004). Moreover, a joint venture can provide a suitable context where several learning processes can develop; for example, cooperative learning (Kale & Singh, 2007; Tsang, 2002). However, the incidence of IJVs and alliances do not have a guarantee in success. Anh, Baughn, Hang, and Neupert, (2006) have claimed that the process of organizational learning in alliances as such in IJVs is difficult, often misunderstood, and commonly coupled with considerable frustrations. As a result, the researcher is in need to conduct a study on what factor that possibly contribute to advancing IJV's knowledge acquisition from its foreign parent(s). Findings from such studies can inspire effective leaders to draw programs to enhance successful learning and improve IJVs competitiveness.

In the literature, most of previous studies has examined absorptive capacity and social capital as IJV's knowledge facilitators (Anh & Baughn, 2013; Dhanaraj, Lyles, Steensma, & Tihanyi, 2004; Lane, Salk, & Lyles, 2001; Lyles & Salk, 1996; Minbaeva, Park, Vertinsky, & Cho, 2018; Park, 2011; Park, Vertinsky, & Minbaeva, 2013; Rotsios, Sklavounos, & Hajidimitriou, 2018; Thi Thuc Anh, 2017). However, there is lack of studies that propose knowledge management practices as IJV's determinant. Knowledge management practices refers to a set of management activities conducted by the IJV with the aim of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of organisational knowledge resources (Schiuma, Andreeva, & Kianto, 2012). Knowledge management practices is the obligation of management's to its company to develop articulated policies, goals, and organizational learning as well as to assess the performance of its workers (Evangelista, 2009).

From the Knowledge-based theory, knowledge acquisition is not the ultimate goal to the organization, but it is core resource to increase the organization competitiveness. However, Anh and Baughn, (2013) argued that knowledge is not synonymous with performance; the influence of new knowledge on certain outcomes can be constrained by the joint venture's strategy or organisation. This standpoint is consistent with the increase in reported number of failed IJVs, where an average of two in five IJVs is perpetual strugglers or outright failures (Bamford, Ernst, & Fubini, 2004; Beamish & Delios, 1997; Damanpour, Devece, Chen, & Pothukuchi, 2012). With the exception of some studies Zhan, Chen, Erramilli, and Nguyen, (2009), there has been very limited empirical investigation to understand whether transferred resources and knowledge from foreign partners have contributed to IJVs' competitiveness. As a result, conducting an empirical study is needed to evaluate the direct outcome, which reflects the effectiveness of knowledge acquired from foreign partners.

Therefore, this study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of how knowledge management practices can facilitate the acquisition of knowledge by IJVs. Furthermore, understanding how IJV's competitiveness can be a positive outcome IJV's knowledge acquisition. Thus, it is imperative to have a fine-grained understanding of underlying factor through which an IJV can leverage the benefits of knowledge transfer and the conditions under which it might work. Without an adequate understanding of this, it is difficult for IJVs to truly take advantage of the knowledge transferred from their foreign partner(s). Based on this, we posits the following research question: Does knowledge management practices effect on IJV's knowledge acquisition? Does IJV's knowledge acquisition effect on IJV's competitiveness?

This conceptual paper is structured as follow: after introduction, the next section is the literature review. Next is methodology, followed by recommendation for future studies. Final section is conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Knowledge Acquisition

Learning in an IJV takes place when the IJV obtains new information from its foreign parent (s), processes it and, changes or modifies its behaviour to reflect new information in order to create better products, services or other forms of outcomes (Thi Thuc Anh, 2017). Through acquired knowledge, an IJV can develop new abilities to face the changes in its environment, thus, improving its efficiency (Chrysostome, Nigam, & Jarilowski, 2013), stability (Fang & Zou, 2010), competitiveness (Zhan et al., 2009), innovativeness (Idris & Seng Tey, 2011; Park, 2015) and performance (P. T. T. Anh & Baughn, 2011; C. Park, Vertinsky, & Becerra, 2015). Therefore, the definition of knowledge acquisition by IJVs in this study is derived from studies by Nguyen and Aoyama, (2015) and Sazali and Raduan, (2011), which stated that new

knowledge is acquired, absorbed, and efficiently applied by IJVs from their foreign partner(s), hence, creating manufacturing activities and administrative methods similar to foreign partners.

In the literature, Lyles and Salk, (1996) have pioneered a study on knowledge acquisition in IJVs and since then, many studies have followed suit and focused on related subjects. Lyles and Salk, (1996) have suggested contextual variables that impact knowledge acquisition from foreign partners in IJV, and these factors include the absorption capacity that affects a firm's ability to learn, active involvement by the foreign parent, and its articulated goals in IJVs. From the first study by Lyles and Salk, (1996) until the most current research studies (1996-2019), many tend to examine the determinants that centralise on certain perspectives and completely ignore some other determinants from other crucial perspectives. There have since been numerous studies that focused on actors' capabilities and social perspectives.

Numerous studies have explored issues that demonstrate the relevant actors' capabilities, which are recipient capabilities and sender capabilities. Firstly, many studies have suggested that the absorptive capacity of the recipient is a vital element in IJVs' knowledge acquisition (Anh & Baughn, 2013; Anh et al., 2006; Park, 2011; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Lane et al., 2001; Lyles & Barden, 2000; Lyles & Salk, 1996; Thi Thuc Anh, 2017; Zhan et al., 2009). Most of these studies have investigated multi-dimensional factors of absorptive capacity in terms of the firm's ability to recognise, assimilate and apply the gained knowledge. Secondly, studies have found that the disseminative capacity of the transferor or the capability of the sending unit (e.g. foreign partners) is crucial to IJVs' knowledge acquisition (Minbaeva et al., 2018; Park, 2011; Park, 2015). Besides actors' capabilities, most studies to date have also focused on social perspectives by examining social capital in IJV's knowledge acquisition (Ado, Su, & Wanjiru, 2016; Dhanaraj et al., 2004; C. Park & Vertinsky, 2016; C. Park et al., 2015; C. Park, Vertinsky, & Lee, 2012; Rotsios et al., 2018; Tsang, Nguyen, & Erramilli, 2004). Therefore, most previous empirical studies on IJV's knowledge acquisition have focused on absorptive capacity, disseminative capacity, and social capital, which are related to actors' capabilities and social perspectives. In addition, there is some conceptual papers attempt to suggest factors that may influence IJV's knowledge acquisition. For instance transfer mechanisms (Elhachemi, 2019; Tamma Elhachemi, 2017), formal mechanisms (Elhachemi & Ahmadc, 2018; Tamma Elhachemi, 2018), Environmental Uncertainty (Elhachemi & Ahmad, 2018),

Studies on IJVs' knowledge acquisition from foreign partners have since received much attention; however, focusing on the determinants of actors' capabilities and social perspectives are insufficient to understand what determines knowledge acquisition of IJVs. Thus, previous findings are subject to verification. Therefore, there are limited studies that had tried to identify potential factors from different perspectives that can possibly determine effective knowledge acquisition, and this has left a gap in the literature.

2.2. Knowledge Management Practices

Researchers presented that knowledge management practices is vital indicators of knowledge processes and firm's performance (Inkinen & Inkinen, 2016). Inkpen and Dinur (1998) have recommended that distinctive knowledge exchange is more successful between partners with various knowledge management practices. Knowledge management practices are recipient managerial and organizational practices planned to accomplish organizational objectives by effective and efficient management of the organization's knowledge properties (Inkinen & Inkinen, 2016; Kianto, Ritala, Spender, & Vanhala, 2014; Schiuma et al., 2012).

Knowledge management commitment can only be achieved when a manager takes the responsibility of implementing a strategic business plan (Keramati & Azadeh, 2007). Top management support is also crucial because it facilitates knowledge processes for greater organizational learning and spawns competitive services and products. Additionally, knowledge in risk assessment and management is vital in predicting business risks and identifying new market information (Lee, Gon Kim, & Kim, 2012). Therefore, managers can create a learning culture by incorporating values such as risk-taking, courage, efficient communication, empowerment, and maximizing performance. Knowledge-oriented leadership empowers and promotes trust and learning through knowledge exploration and exploitation practices. These practices can contribute to innovative products, methods, and procedures (Martín-de Castro, López-Sáez, Delgado-Verde, Donate, & Guadamillas, 2011). Hence, knowledge management practices is the core facilitator for organizational learning.

2.3. IJV's Competitiveness

In the recent decade, the shape of the economy is changing rapidly. Traditionally, the competition was somewhat simple, in which the factors of production are the most needed effort, and it is easy to measure its success or failure. However, in this era, modern competition becomes more dynamic. Global competition has increased. New knowledge, skills, market, product, management concept, and capabilities are continuously changing to adapt to industrial competitiveness. Porter's (1980) generic competitive strategies have described alternative positions in the market that can enhance firm's competitive advantage: via differentiating itself to increase consumer value and thereby achieving better margins, or via lower costs than the competitors. Therefore, firm (IJV) competitiveness can be defined as the degree to which a firm performs in a marketplace, compared to its major competitors (Wu, Wang, Chen, & Pan, 2008; W. p. Wu, 2008).

Generally, one of the aims of a firm in a transitional economy to form international joint ventures is to gain valuable knowledge which in turn will allow conditions for sustainable competitive advantage in the market. As defined by (Barney, 1991), competitive advantage is the firm's ability to generate superior value for its customers (in relation to competitors), which in turn makes it the preferred vendor or brand. In addition, Collis and Montgomery, (2008) have explained that sustainable competitive advantage is the ability to offer superior customer value on an enduring or consistent basis, a situation in which competitors are unable to easily imitate the firm's capacity for value creation. Therefore, in order to achieve a competitive advantage, a company should possess a dynamic ability to assimilate knowledge (Grant, 1996); to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, a company should learn to protect its proprietary of knowledge from imitation and expropriation by rivals (Liebeskind, 1996). Thus, the firm's competitiveness can be attained by having knowledge management advantage and concentrated learning (Liu, Chen, & Tsai, 2004).

In the literature, a couple of empirical studies have acknowledged that knowledge acquisition is a vital factor to fortify corporate competitiveness (e.g., Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Holsapple, Jones, & Leonard, 2015; Jiang, Bao, Xie, & Gao, 2016; Lane et al., 2001). For instance, a study conducted by (Holsapple & Jones, 2004), has posited that each activity in the knowledge chain can have an impact on an organization's competitiveness. In the same line, other empirical studies have supported the propositions activities in knowledge acquisition processes can be performed in ways that contribute to an organization's competitiveness (Holsapple et al., 2015). In a survey among 205 partner firms in alliances, have found that the firm's competitiveness

increases with knowledge acquisition in competitive alliances, but decreases in non-competitive alliances (Jiang et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this paper was relied on searching in library and evaluate previous literature review about knowledge acquisition in transitional economics. The library search encompasses from online materials to article journals and chapter in a book. References are based on online databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct and Google Scholar. In order to understand the point of view of this study, unlike of other researches that look to knowledge acquisition from local partner or foreign partner perspectives. The current study customized to give a contribution to IJV' knowledge acquisition from foreign partner perspective. Where the previous studies in this perspective are limited in the period (1996-2018). And the first study has been pioneered by the study of (Lyles & Salk, 1996) and the researches still going till now, 2018.

Moreover, in order to suggest the theoretical framework, this study have also analysed the previous meta-analysis, critical literature reviews, and different studies on inter-actors knowledge transfer and acquisition in different contexts (developing, emerging, and developed countries) to understand thoroughly on the potential factors that may affect the IJV' knowledge acquisition. Therefore, the References for the current study are only taken from article from journal, chapter from a book and full text document. Thus, limitations from this paper could be due to limited resources from databases as mentioned earlier as the search results are also excluded Sciences, and different studies related to knowledge acquisition transfer between inter-actors. Also, this reference are not restricted to just transitional economics but also taking into consideration worldwide inter-actors knowledge transfer and acquisition in emerging and developing countries.

4. Recommendation

I strongly recommended that, future studies should examine this model, and by adding other potential factors from different aspects that expected to be vibrant predictors of knowledge acquisition such as; transfer mechanisms (Chen et al., 2014; Williams, 2007) and formal mechanisms (Y. Liu, Li, Shi, & Liu, 2017b) to provide new insights and contribute to the body of knowledge on the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, because of its limited scope as an empirical study, it is recommended to test the IJV's innovativeness as an outcome to IJV's knowledge acquisition. Finally, future studies are strongly recommended to examined this study' model in Algeria, more particularly, in the context of oil and gas industry. The reason behind it is the importance of this industry to Algerian economy, with reserves of 12.2 billion barrels of oil and 4.5 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas, the country ranks as having the world's 14th biggest oil reserves and the 9th-largest natural gas reserves and the 4-largest gas exporter in the world. In addition, being the major contributor to the country's economy, the Algerian hydrocarbon segment represents approximately 94% of export income, roughly 45% of GDP, and nearly 60% of budget revenues. Furthermore, as an important producer of oil and gas, Algeria is therefore known as a major natural gas producer in Africa, Europe's the second-largest natural gas supplier, the 3th-largest technically recoverable shale gas resources in the world, the third-highest oil producer in Africa (after Nigeria and Angola), the third-largest estimated quantity of proven crude oil reserves in Africa (guide to invest in Algeria, 2017; AND, 2017).

5. Conclusion

The current paper has demonstrated a theoretical gap in the context of knowledge acquisition of IJV, which in turn furthers the understanding of potential factor influencing the process of knowledge acquisition. Therefore, through comprehensive literature searches in e-library for meta-analysis and building on critical literature review about knowledge transfer and acquisition, this paper suggests a comprehensive two-fold conceptual framework based on knowledge-based theory. The framework contains knowledge management practices that can influence on IJVs' knowledge acquisition, which in turn affect IJVs' competitiveness. Therefore, our research shows that these factors will not only inspire the management and stakeholders to implement strategies and programs designed to encourage organizational learning but also help the decision makers of IJVs to translate transferred knowledge to develop the IJVs' competitiveness.

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