Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI)
Volume 12, Issue 6, July, 2021: 5079 - 5091

Mechanisms Influencing Knowledge Acquisition and Digital Supply Chain Management: A conceptual Paper

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Abstract

The establishment of international joint ventures (IJVs) is seen as a key tool for gaining access to MNCs' know-how, expertise, and skills. Drawing on the intensive literature on knowledge acquisition in the context of strategic alliances, inter-firm collaboration, buyer-supplier, multinational firms, and international joint ventures during the period (1996-2020), this conceptual paper proposes formal governance mechanisms as a determinant to IJVs' knowledge acquisition. IJVs' knowledge acquisition, in turn, will lead to improve and apply the digital supply chain management at the IJVs. To support and justify the suggested framework, a literature review is presented and recommendations are given.

Keywords: knowledge acquisition, formal governance mechanisms, digital supply chain management, international joint venture

1. Introduction

Knowledge is commonly recognized as a valuable skill that offers a competitive advantage to businesses (Okonkwo, 2019). To put it another way, the knowledge that enables businesses to improve and build skills quicker than their competitors is a source of competitive advantage.

Nonetheless, there is a lack of knowledge and the means to obtain it in the context of less developed economies (Low & Robins, 2014). International joint ventures (IJVs) with more experienced global companies have long been recognized as a critical way for IJVs to gain access to, obtain, exchange, and leverage foreign partners' information capital that would otherwise be inaccessible locally (Lee, Park, & Vertinsky, 2012; Park, 2011). Besides, to function properly, IJVs receive funding and assistance from both partners (Chen, Chen, & Zhou, 2014). This new insight improves the ability of these international joint ventures to interpret and adapt to their surroundings, resulting in more improvement of different IJV departments and lead to general performance.

As supply chain management is a significant department at IJV. Min, Zacharia, and Smith, (2019) stated that supply chains (SCs) and production logistics systems are an integral part of many technical and personal practices in modern life, and they are extremely important for global growth. SCs, on the other hand, with the most recent technological advancements, it does not remain stagnant, but rather adapt and alter in scale, form, structure, and the way they are organized, regulated and handled (MacCarthy, Blome, Olhager, Srai, & Zhao, 2016). Through the transfer of knowledge and technology from foreign partners to the IJV setting, the management was able to improve its various departments through digital transformation. The way procedures and activities are completed are changing as a result of digital technology. People one day may be able to dispatch fleets of vehicles using a basic handheld device, thanks to the benefits of digitization in logistics. With only a quick electronic look, it might be possible to determine the contents of a freight container. Wearable devices on sleeves may be available in the near future (Büyüközkan & Göçer, 2018). Tu, Lim, and Yang, (2018) clarified that the influence of the modern digital age on the fourth industrial revolution, information and communication technologies, and Internet of Things (IoT)-based cyber-physical system (CPS) architecture for manufacturing logistics and SC applications has resulted in the introduction and acceleration of developments needed for industry digitization (Büyüközkan and Göçer, 2018). Organizations become more mindful of these future trends as opportunities abound, emphasizing how digital supply chain (DSC) will bring value to businesses. Given that the primary focus of organizations in a competitive market is to maintain and improve core competencies, modern organizations can engage with their dealers through DSC processes for the development and distribution of their goods and services (Büyüközkan & Göçer, 2018).

However, the acquisition of knowledge by IJVs is not guaranteed, Anh et al., 2006) explained that the method of acquiring information has been discovered to be complex, often confused, and often fraught with frustration. This has resulted in a high rate of disappointment in IJVs, with more than half of all IJVs either suffering or failing (Bamford, Ernst, & Fubini, 2004). In this line, this research is being carried out to present the current situation by determining the possible factor that can affect knowledge acquisition from a foreign partner through an IJV. As a result, researchers must address several questions to better understand what factors influence an IJV's knowledge acquisition from its international parent partners, which can increase the IJV's outcome.

2. Problem statement

Research on knowledge transfer studies found that inter-firm knowledge transfer is more operative in equity joint ventures than in contract-based alliances (Mowery, Oxley, & Silverman, 1996). However, not in all cases of the knowledge transfer to the IJV context can happen. As justified by Sampson, (2007), Many sender firms are unable to share their knowledge because of the unpredictable payoffs and the possibility of losing an advantage due to knowledge leakage. Furthermore, due to the lack of firm-specific dialects across IJV borders, companies can find it difficult to seamlessly transfer their skills and experiences (Kachra & White, 2008). To facilitate the knowledge exchange between sender and receiver, Dahistrom, McNeilly, and Speh, (1996) argue that formalized obligations and responsibilities enable both sides to act in a manner that ensures desired outcomes. Accordingly, Formal governance mechanisms in IJVs that include a foreign partner depend on legal and economic binding structures to eliminate opportunistic risks (Luo, 2007; Luo, Liu, Yang, Maksimov, & Hou, 2015). These mechanisms prevent private driving forces from pursuing organizational certainty, resulting in increased responsibilities between IJVs and their international partners.

Whereas in the literature, since the first research (Lyles & Salk, 1996), most previous studies have looked at absorptive capacity, social capital, and transfer mechanisms as determinants of IJV's knowledge acquisition, either in conjunction or separately (e.g. Dhanaraj, Lyles, Steensma, & Tihanyi, 2004; Anh & Baughn, 2013; Elhachemi, 2019; Lane, Salk, & Lyles, 2001; Lyles & Salk, 1996; Minbaeva, Park, Vertinsky, & Cho, 2018; Rotsios, Sklavounos, & Hajidimitriou, 2018; Tamma, Takyeddine, & Emir Moumene, 2019). However, they have paid less attention to how international joint ventures can proactively employ governance mechanisms to facilitate knowledge acquisition from foreign partners. As a result, how formal governance mechanisms have a role to facilitate knowledge acquisition deserves more research attention. This study proposes to employ formal governance mechanisms through two mechanisms: ex-ante contracts and ex-post control, and elaborates in detail on their respective impacts on IJV's knowledge acquisition.

Knowledge acquisition is not the greatest obstacle and motivation for all IJVs, but as shown by Samuel, Goury, Gunasekaran, and Spalanzani, (2011), knowledge is a key enabler in supply chain management and a vital component in information-intensive and multi-cultural business environments. Sangari, Hosnavi, and Zahedi, (2015) concluded that knowledge is seen as a source of strategic advantages in supply chains and better supply chain results from a knowledge-based viewpoint. The knowledge-based approach provides a new better understanding of the mechanisms for updating and transferring processes within supply chains, and a growing number of researchers are looking into inter-organizational sharing among various actors to improve supply chain efficiency (Wagner & Buko, 2005). Since digitalization has had such a significant impact on supply chain operations, it is clear that shifting from a conventional supply chain to a digital supply chain (DSC) continues to be a strategic advantage that creates long-term value for businesses. Ageron, Bentahar, and Gunasekaran, (2020) characterized digital supply chain as the advancement of information systems and the

implementation of emerging technology that improve the supply chain's integration and agility, thus enhancing customer experience and the organization's long-term success.

However, learning knowledge is not always associated with performance; the impact of new knowledge on such results, such as the likelihood of loss, may be limited by the joint venture's plan or context. Except for some studies (e.g. Samuel et al., 2011; Yang, Rui, Rauniar, Ikem, & Xie, 2013; Yu, Jacobs, Salisbury, & Enns, 2013), There has been relatively little longitudinal research on whether transferred resources and expertise from foreign partners have aided the success of the digital supply management chain. As a result, academic analysis is needed to assess the direct outcome, which represents the feasibility of expertise gained by international partners.

As this study undertaking the perspective of IJVs' knowledge acquisition from foreign partner and the proposed determinant was derived from the findings of several empirical studies on knowledge transfer, knowledge management, and knowledge acquisition in different contexts like strategic alliances, inter-firm collaborations, buyer and supplier relationships, and multinational corporations. As a result, it is hoped that this conceptual paper would provide a comprehensive explanation of how this suggested determinant will help or hinder IJVs in acquiring knowledge from international partners. This conceptual paper aims to contribute to the body of information and practices surrounding IJV knowledge acquisition by proposing a two-fold model in which formal governance mechanisms is considered as a determinant of IJV knowledge acquisition, resulting in better digital supply chain management. Therefore, this paper proposes the following questions: Does formal governance mechanisms affects IJVs' knowledge acquisition from their foreign partners? Does an IJV's knowledge acquisition affect its digital supply chain management?

The method of this conceptual paper is based on library research and also the extensive evaluation of theoretical reviews in the literature on the subject of the knowledge acquisition of IJVs in developing and transitional economies from a foreign partner. Library research includes online materials, journal articles, and chapters in books. References are based on online databases, such as Scopus, EBSCO database, Web of Science, Science Direct, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. This paper highlights the knowledge acquisition of IJVs from the foreign partners' perspectives. The data used in this study covers the literature for the 1996-2020 period. The first study was pioneered by Lyles and Salk (1996) and research studies in the same context are still ongoing till current. Therefore, deriving from the knowledge-based view and transaction cost economics theories, previous arguments, gaps, and logical justifications, this paper suggests a conceptual framework with propositions and invites researchers to test it empirically and practically in the setting of developing or transitional economies.

After the introduction, the structure of this conceptual paper is as follows: the next section is the literature review, followed by recommendations for future studies. The final section is the conclusion.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. IJV's Knowledge Acquisition

Ahmad, Mohamad, and Ibrahim, (2013) stated that Knowledge acquisition is a knowledge management activity that has become widely used in companies, particularly for those seeking new knowledge in a specific context through personalized activities. Extracting, translating, and transferring information to enhance current organizational knowledge are examples of knowledge learning practices (Liao, Wu, Hu, & Tsuei, 2009). As a result, knowledge acquisition can be described as embracing information from the outside world and translating it so that the organization can use it (Liao et al., 2009).

In the context of IJVs, Kandemir and Hult, (2005) explained that IJV creation is seen as a vital vehicle for accessing, understanding, and absorbing the partners' talents, technology, and tacit experience, according to the study. Furthermore, the knowledge acquired from parent organizations enhances these IJVs' ability to understand and respond to their environment, resulting in better outcomes (Park et al., 2015). When an IJV receives new knowledge from its foreign parent firm(s), processes it, and adjusts or modifies its actions to reflect the new information to offer better products, services, or other forms of outcomes, it is said to be learning (Thi Thuc Anh, 2017). By learning skills, and IJV can acquire new abilities to adapt to changes in its environment, increasing its effectiveness and overall performance. (Chrysostome, Nigam, & Jarilowski, 2013; Park, Vertinsky, & Becerra, 2015). As a consequence, Sazali and Raduan, (2011) described IJV knowledge acquisition as new knowledge acquired from its international partner firm(s), absorbed, and effectively applied by it, resulting in manufacturing and administrative processes and methods that are similar to those of the foreign partners.

Various determinants that may promote knowledge acquisition from foreign partners have been investigated in previous studies on IJVs' knowledge acquisition from foreign partners from 1996 to 2019. For instance, many studies (e.g. Lyles and Salk, 1996; Anh et al., 2006; Lane et al., 2001; Lyles & Barden, 2000; Lyles, von Krogh, & Aadne, 2003) looked at multi-dimensional absorptive capability factors in terms of an IJV's ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply new information. Other research has shown that the transferor's disseminative potential or the sender's capability (e.g., international partners) is critical to IJV knowledge acquisition. (Minbaeva et al., 2018; Park, 2011; Park, 2015). Further, some academics have concentrated on uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional social capital as an element of IJVs' knowledge acquisition (Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Tsang, Nguyen, & Erramilli, 2004). Moreover, current researches have inspected transfer mechanisms as an antecedent to IJVs' knowledge acquisition (Tamma, 2019a; Tamma et al., 2019). As a consequence, from the first study by Lyles and Salk (1996) to the most recent fieldwork (1996-2019), many researchers have tended to concentrate on such determinants while missing others.

This paper suggests another potential determinant that may enable or deter the IJVs' knowledge acquisition from foreign partners. Therefore, originating from previous studies on knowledge acquisition and transfer in different contexts and line with previous theoretical and empirical studies (e.g., (Elhachemi, Saoula, Abderrahmane, Benabid, & Seddaoui, 2020; Tamma, 2019a, 2019b; Tamma, Abd. Rahim b, & Fakhrorazi, 2017), we suggest formal governance mechanisms (Beamish & Lupton, 2016; Zhang & Zhou, 2013) as the key factor affecting knowledge acquisition by IJVs. The above-mentioned main determinant has been largely ignored in the literature on IJV knowledge acquisition, resulting in a knowledge deficit. This can lead to the erroneous conclusion that IJVs' knowledge acquisition is affected by a variety of unrelated influences.

Therefore, this paper is a two-fold model proposition, where formal governance mechanisms is the determinant of knowledge acquisition, which in turn, will lead to enhanced digital supply chain management of the IJVs.

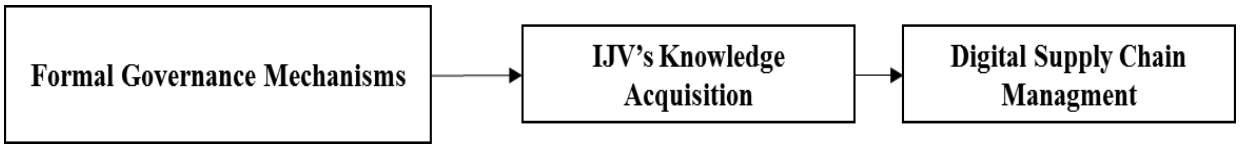

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Paper

3.2. IJV's Knowledge Acquisition Determinants

3.2.1. Formal Governance Mechanisms

Formal governance processes in a coalition, such as IJVs, may have a significant effect on joint organizational learning and information transfer. A formal governance mechanism is identified within the bureaucratic system of an IJV, as one of the usual organizational instruments for the sake of information transfer, for the ultimate purpose of regulating the knowledge exchange (Dutta & Weiss, 1997). Formal governance mechanisms, like TCE theory, are embedded in operational interventions economically, stemming from an economic rationale and governed by economic legal systems (Luo et al., 2015), and they support the method of harmonizing relationship partners by supervision and management (Liu et al., 2009). Transaction opportunism is specifically impacted by structured governance and is fundamental to the stability of the transition process, as (Zhang & Zhou, 2013) show. Formal governance systems may use mutually agreed-upon codes of behavior to eliminate conflicts of interest and provide a solid foundation of guidelines for behavioral decisions, reducing uncertainties and, as a result, reducing the risk of disaster (Lee & Cavusgil, 2006).

Recently, researchers conducted research on overseas companies that have expanded over the last 50 years. The study asserts that, due to a variety of policy systems, more consideration should be paid to IJV corporate governance processes, which have a significant effect on the escalation of the difficulty of handling and negotiating agreements (Beamish & Lupton, 2016).

Apart from that, unbiased principles held by administrators and analysts alike, such as the need for discretion over cooperation in order to maximize optimum outcomes for either group,

should be considered. They also emphasized the importance of a short-term IJV deal. As a result, this paper uses contract and control to assess the formal structures of IJVs. Poppo and Zenger, (2002) argue that contracts can be characterized by each partner's rules and responsibilities, as well as unique behaviors during unexpected difficulties and awareness of key objectives; Control over IJVs, on the other hand, is a supplemental replacement for preserving the mechanism of formal contracts. Investigators try to describe control as one partner's choice control over IJV's regular operations (Hébert & Beamish, 2017). Therefore, control management can be defined as the process by which partners distribute authority to the parent companies in order to operate a joint venture (Steensma & Lyles, 2000).

Empirically, findings from distributing around 225 surveys on paired buyers from China found that contracts can efficiently increase the quality and quantity of transmitted knowledge (Liu et al., 2017). Another study showed that a detailed contract would deeply promote explicit information acquisition when administering the questionnaire to 168 international subsidiaries in China (Li et al., 2010). Furthermore, another longitudinal study undertaken in China found that administrative power in the arrangements discourages partner opportunism (Luo, 2007). In contrast to developed countries, developing countries are more likely to exercise direct leverage over arrangements. This is evident in Zhang and Zhou's (2013) research, which found that information sharing between supplier and buyer is positively linked to relationship control. For that reason, the proposal is as follows:

Proposition 2: Formal governance mechanisms has a positive effect on knowledge acquisition.

3.3. IJV’s Knowledge Acquisition Outcome

3.3.1. Digital Supply Chain Management

Over the past few decades, technology has advanced, and the process of digitalization is becoming a reality in all sectors. The way procedures and activities are completed are changing as a result of digital technology. Industries and associations must change or face becoming obsolete. Because of information and technical advancements, certain corporate systems are no longer self-sufficient. This is due to the fact that digitalization has affected nearly every part of human life across the world. According to market predictions, 76 percent of the world's population now has access to the internet, with half of them actively using social media. Furthermore, nine out of ten internet users make payments online, and 43 percent of businesses use advanced big data analytics. By 2020, cloud storage is expected to retain around 37% of all produced data. 26 billion internet-connected "things" are projected to be active within the same time frame (Penthin & Dillman, 2015). Working conditions will be drastically altered as a result of digitalization. By incorporating new ideas of smart production, smart contracts, and smart supply chain, as well as knowledge sharing, it would shift processes in banking, distribution, maintenance, logistic, and supply chain (Preindlet al., 2020).

Digitalization has had a significant impact on supply chain operations, and it is clear that the transition from a conventional supply chain to a digital supply chain (DSC) continues to be a strategic benefit that creates long-term value for businesses. In the next five years, some

industrial studies have proposed a digital transformation strategy for the supply chain (CapGemini, 2016). Previously, the supply chain is a network of firms and their vendors designed for the manufacture and delivery of a single commodity. The measures involved in getting a product or service to a customer are referred to as the conventional supply chain. The SCOR model, which consists of the Plan, Source, Make, Deliver, and Return phases, can be used to manage these steps, according to the supply chain council. Supply chain management is a critical mechanism since streamlined supply chains result in reduced costs and shorter output times. Nevertheless, certain qualities that are needed in today's and tomorrow's market specifications are missing from conventional supply chains. The standard supply chain is made up of a number of separate, siloed phases. Transforming a conventional supply chain into a digital supply chain structure eliminates these barriers, resulting in a seamless operation. Therefore, as stated by Kinnet, (2015) DSC is an intuitive, value-driven network that creates new sources of income and market value by using new approaches through technologies and analytics. Ageron et al., (2020) The digital supply chain is characterized as the implementation of information systems and the introduction of emerging technologies that improve the supply chain's integration and agility, thus enhancing customer experience and the organization's long-term performance. To put it another way, the digital supply chain is a smart, value-added, novel mechanism that employs new methods, including digital transformation with technology, to generate competitive value and network effects (Büyüközkan & Göçer, 2018).

Preindl, Nikolopoulos, and Litsiou, (2020) clarified that the DSC increases awareness of material flows through the supply chain and decreases bullwhip effects by making real-time data accessible to help corporate success goals such as sales, benefit, market share, efficiency, responsiveness, expense, dependability, and longevity. In DSN, There is improved coordination and cooperation among supply chain collaborating companies, resulting in timely product distribution to consumers.

According to Samuel et al., (2011), the willingness of a company to quickly leverage its entire network of manufacturers, retailers, buyers, and clients is one of the benefits of supply chain management. The information flows that are at the heart of network partner communication and cooperation aren't just a collection of diverse data sources; they also offer an incentive to develop knowledge-based resources that are an integral part of the expanded company's capacities (Davis & Spekman, 2004). Knowledge management and learning can be seen as mechanisms that can bring creativity into supply chains, and they can be seen as motors for supply chain growth (Gammelgard, 2007). Members' cumulative knowledge and expertise can be the most important source of value generation in dynamic supply chains. New advances in computation and information technologies today allow for the preservation and transmission of the information at a supply chain scale that was previously impossible when scholars proposed significant contributions to knowledge management and organizational learning. Therefore, as concluded by Samuel et al., (2011) that Knowledge development is a critical facilitator in supply chain management and a vital component of today's information-intensive, multi-cultural workplaces.

Empirically, research conducted via a case study Shaw, Meixell, and Tuggle, (2003), articulates that information management (KM) would increase the success of existing SCM programs

while also increasing the likelihood of new SCM projects succeeding. They developed a method for collecting and disseminating supply chain information in a report Fletcher and Polychronakis, (2007), they devised a method for gathering and disseminating supply chain data. Small and medium-sized companies were the subject of their investigation (SMEs). The method was developed based on previous studies and then empirically optimized by additional fieldwork with a small business analysis. The framework's aim was to allow supply chain members to tap into and ultimately disseminate their knowledge and expertise. A research by Myers and Cheung, (2008) has investigated how exchanging knowledge helps buyers and sellers in a multinational supply chain. The problem of knowledge sharing in such an environment is more complex due to cross-cultural differences. Market structure and corporate similarities, as well as gaps between customers and vendors, have a larger effect on knowledge sharing than their needs, according to the results. Cross-cultural discrepancies scarcely matter, beyond what other literature claims (e.g. Ford, Connelly, & Meister, 2003). In a different research, Al-Mutawah, Lee, and Cheung, (2009) highlighted the significance of incorporating information and knowledge flows within the manufacturing supply chain, as well as managing dispersed knowledge. To solve the issue of exchanging implicit information in the industrial supply chain, a mechanism focused on multi-agent schemes was proposed. A study conducted and empirically tested the effect of knowledge management applications in the supply chain. Where the food industry was the subject of the research. They introduced a method for examining how an IT-based supply chain approach meets the firms' information management needs (Corso, Dogan, Mogre, & Perego, 2010). The proposal is as follows:

Proposition 4: Knowledge acquisition has a positive impact on IJVs' performance.

4. Recommendation for Future Studies

This paper suggests formal governance mechanisms as a potential determinant of IJVs' knowledge acquisition, which in turn, can lead to applying digital supply chain management. We strongly urge researchers to undertake this model in future empirical studies. It is also recommended that future researchers undertake an empirical study in the context of transitional economics like Algeria, particularly at logistic IJVs. A future study is preferred to be conducted due to the evidence that can be seen in the Global Economic Forum (2019) report, whereby in the context of Algeria, Digital skills among the active population and ICT adoption are found to be relatively very low. Therefore, understanding the impact of acquired knowledge on the application of digital supply chain is significant to be studied. We recommend conducting a study to understand the effect of knowledge acquisition on the strategy creation and digital human resource management.

5. Conclusion

Studying knowledge acquisition through IJVs has become one of the most current issues that deserve attention and further study. This paper shows a theoretical gap in the context of knowledge acquisition of IJVs. To fill the gap, this paper proposes potential factors that may influence knowledge acquisition. Based on the knowledge-based theory, this study suggests a two-fold model comprising IJVs' knowledge acquisition determinant (formal governance mechanisms) and outcome (digital supply chain management). The paper is based on a

literature review for each factor and provides many propositions, ending with recommendations for future studies. These recommendations may not only motivate 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 its supply chain management.

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