

## Role of organizational learning in strategic alliance

### ABSTRACT

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Why some alliances are more successful than other alliances. This is a question confusing not only managers but also researchers in fields related to organizational science. Traditionally, researchers focus on the dyadic relationship between alliance partners when they solve the problem. Transaction cost economists think that the problem can be solved through ex ante commitment to alliance partners. The investment reduces the possibilities of opportunism. But they only highlight the opportunism of alliance partners and simply take contractual agreements or governance structures as a method to solve it (Gulati, 1995). They ignore the role of trust between alliance partners. Economic sociology takes the relationship characteristics as key elements to interpret the differences between alliances. They pay attention to behavioral factors (Duysters et al., 2002), such as trust and commitment. Some researchers refer to them as relational capital (Kale et al., 2000). Some researchers from evolutionary economics and organization learning theory and competence-based theory care about the internal characteristics of alliance partners more than the dyadic relationship between them. Alliance capability is the firm's ability to achieve good alliance performance.

This paper combines prior research on alliance performance and puts forward the intermediary to relate them. Economic sociology explains alliance performance by relational capital at dyadic level. Organizational learning theory and competence based theory use alliance capability at firm level to address the problem why some alliance performance is better than others. The relationship between relational capital and alliance capabilities is ambiguous. This paper identifies organizational learning as the factor connecting them.

Relational capital provides basis and effective channel for organizational learning. That is, strong relational capital enhances attitudinal commitment and reduces conflict.

It makes aged alliance possible. Firms can communicate with each other effectively and find their organizational fit sufficiently. All these factors provide an external environment for organizational learning and facilitate learning from each other.

Alliance capability is categorized into four dimensions in this paper. They are receptivity, absorptive capability, integrative capability and innovation capability. There are positive feedbacks between the four capabilities and organizational learning.