

# Innovation, Management and Service

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## Welcome

Welcome to 2011 2nd International Conference on Innovation, Management and Service - ICIMS 2011. At first, we are so glad to see the progress of this conference both in terms of quality and quantity. Based on the success of the previous conferences by IEDRC, The number of the submissions for this conference has increased largely and many more scholars such as the leading researchers, engineers and scientists in the domain of interest from around the world, participate actively in and start to enjoy this conference. We trust deeply that we will step on a higher floor of this conference this year in Singapore.

As a global academic symposium on Innovation, Management and Service, the aim of ICIMS 2011 is to facilitate the communication of academe between domestic and foreign, to construct international communication platform, and also to exhibit the new fruits of new advances of Innovation, Management and Service.

At this moment, our sincere thanks give to organizers and program committee who deeply contributed to the success of the conference in this year by organizing a technical track for the ICIMS 2011. Special thanks are due to the authors who contributed to this conference.

We hope and believe that everybody here will have an academic enjoyment during this conference in Singapore.

ICIMS 2011 Organizing Committees

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## Factors Influencing Strategic Technology Alliance Formation of Malaysian Manufacturers

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the relationship between organisations' resource availability and absorptive capacity as well as type of alliances with organisational performance. The results are based on survey data from 335 manufacturing organisations in Malaysia that were then analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The result establishes that Malaysian manufacturers need to increase their efforts in increasing internal resources that are the source of competitive advantage in order to achieve superior manufacturing performance.

**Keywords:** Strategic technology alliance, resources, manufacturing, Malaysia.

### 1. Introduction

Globalisation and rapid technology change are some of the main challenges faced by organisations today [1]. This challenge is especially felt by manufacturing organisations that are constantly in need of up-to-date technologies. Organisations are then constantly examining their strategies to enhance their innovative capabilities as a means to stay current in their field [1, 2]. Alliances are becoming popular strategies [3-4]; enable firms to decrease the amount of time, costs and risks involved to acquire external technologies [5-7]. In this study STAs hence increasing the number of strategic technology alliances (STAs) formed [5-7]. In this study STAs include all types of alliances such as joint ventures, equity alliances and non-equity alliances between organisations seeking resources, knowledge and technologies to enhance their overall business performance while maintaining their competitive advantage [8-10]. There has been a growing stream of literature on STAs in developing nations [11, 12], where organisations form STAs to access resources that they are lacking and to acquire external knowledge through learning. Additionally, organisations from developing countries also form STAs to adopt and access foreign technologies as they lack indigenous capabilities to create their own technologies [14, 15].

Usually, studies on alliances in high-technology organisations have been limited to developed countries—for example, studies on STAs have been conducted mainly in the US (Hagedoorn, Caryannis & Alexander 2001; Norman 2004; Soh & Roberts 2005; Rothaermel & Deeds 2006; Ybarra & Turk 2009). Studies on STAs have also been conducted in Finland (Vilkkamo & Keii 2003), Italy (Colombo, Grilli & Piva 2006), Greece (Prati 2009) and in transition economies such as Russia (Hagedoorn & Sedanis 1998). Currently, research on STAs is increasing in developing countries such as Taiwan (Ju et al. 2005; Tsai & Wang 2009b) and China (Chen & Wang 2009). Apparently, it is felt that there is still limited research conducted on STAs in developing countries (Abdul Wahab, Abdullah & Che Rose 2009). Therefore this research intends to contribute towards the literature on STAs in developing countries by focusing on organisations' resource availability and absorptive capacity as well as type of alliances as factors affecting the inclination of firms forming STAs and the relationship with organisational performance.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1. Resource Availability

The resource-based view (RBV) regards firms as collections of resources that include tangible assets and capabilities (or intangible assets—usually semi-permanently attached to the firm) [16-19]. This collection of resources must be simultaneously *valuable*, *rare*, *imperfectly imitable*, and *non-substitutable* (sometimes referred to as VRIN) [17]; and are also the firm's source of sustainable competitive advantage [20]. Firms will engage in STAs when there is a need for additional resources (specifically involving technology) that are expensive and difficult to replicate in a certain time frame [21]; and can enhance the value of their existing resources [20]. From this perspective, firms adopt alliances as a means to extend their collection of value-creating resources, which are otherwise unattainable independently. Hence this study defined resource availability as organisation's tangible assets as well as intangible assets that include technology and knowledge embedded in product material, physical assets, processes and production, and management capabilities. Therefore it is proposed that:

**H1:** The organisation's resource availability has a negative relationship to the formation of strategic technology alliance

#### 2.2. Absorptive capacity

Absorptive capacity is largely related to the firm's level of prior knowledge [22]. It is further reconceptualised that absorptive capacity is a set of organisational practices and procedures, by which firms acquire, assimilate, transform and exploit external knowledge [23]. For effective learning to take place, partnering firms should have 'medium knowledge overlap' [24, p. 260] because knowledge overlap that is too high or too low may hinder successful learning in collaborations. Hence it is important for organisations to embrace suitable levels of absorptive capacity prior to forming technology alliances to enable successful STAs. Therefore it is hypothesised:

**H2:** The organisation's absorptive capacity has a positive relationship to formation of strategic technology alliance

#### 2.3. Type of Alliance

Alliances create a unique learning opportunity for firms with different skills, knowledge bases and organisational cultures. Learning outcomes in alliances depend on the type of alliances formed [25]. Various authors acknowledged greater learning opportunities in joint ventures and equity alliances, as compared to non-equity alliances [26-28]. There is however, a challenge for firms to maintain a balance when sharing knowledge with partners, and controlling knowledge flows to avoid unintended divulgence of confidential information [29]. Hence:

**H3:** The nature of strategic technology alliance has a positive relationship to the formation of strategic technology alliance

#### 2.4. Organisational Performance

There is evidence suggesting organisations forming alliances will experience enhanced organisational performance [30-32]. There are also various measures for alliance success; for example partner satisfaction [33], product, market and financial performance [9], profitability [10], and innovation [34]. Due to the demanding and complex production processes, including distribution, marketing, and R&D efforts in Malaysian manufacturing organisations, there are various initiatives and schemes to encourage alliances with world-class corporations and research establishments in order to amplify the performance of these organisations [35]. Hence it is posited that:

**H4:** Strategic technology alliance formed by organisations will lead to positive organisational performance

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