

# External Knowledge Inflows, Absorptive Capacity, Innovations and Performance: An Integrative Frame Work for SMEs based on Resource-Based View (RBV).

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## Abstract

Given that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are central to the sustainability and viability of economies, researchers need to understand at a very basic level the elements that affect SME output. Three of SME Performance's most widely recognized precursors are external knowledge inflow (for both scientific and market knowledge), absorption of external knowledge, and innovation. However, regardless of broad consideration, the hypothetical and empirical status of the linkage between knowledge inflow, absorption capacity and innovation, and SMEs performance stay questionable. Some analysts note that cases concerning an immediate positive relation with external information inflows and efficiency do not get a full picture of the SMEs. It needs the mediator function of ability absorption (ACAP) and innovation in the relation between external information inflows and performance. Thus, this integrative framework will serve as a basic platform to examine the SMEs performance.

**Keywords:** External Knowledge Inflows, Absorptive Capacity, Innovations, Performance and SMEs

## 1. Introduction

SMEs' significant job in the worldwide economy require extend and expanding our comprehension of the frameworks essential for SME performance. Such perspective is noteworthy in backing up manageability and improvement among SMEs. At present, the firm performance is the focal themes of the entrepreneurship and strategy journals (Cassiman and Veugelers 2002; Grandinetti 2016). Despite the monetary importance of SMEs and growing research, there is little consensus upon this driving forces and fundamental procedures for business growth and success (Grandinetti 2016).

From Resource-Based View (RBV), outstanding institutions depend more on their knowledge-based resources to endure (Choi et al. 2010). With the aid of external relations, SMEs can take advantage of the pieces of knowledge from

outside organization (Durst and Edvardsson 2012) that should support their growth and performance (McKelvie and Wiklund 2010; Raisal et al. 2019; Teirlinck and Spithoven 2013). Similarly, through the use of external resources, enterprises can overcome the limitations of the resource and ensure the adequate inflow of knowledge for the firms to grow and perform well (Teirlinck and Spithoven 2013).

The inflows of external knowledge largely depend on the methods of acquisition, source of knowledge and the frequent interaction between key actors / forces such as market and science based forces (Moilanen et al. 2014). Interaction is thus the main factor for obtaining, gaining and advancing new information (Nonaka 1994). A firm can interact with inside firms and between firms and other organizations (Grandinetti 2016). Thus, the close cooperation between these firms helps SMEs to attain its performance related objectives.

In open innovation, researchers examines why and how outer knowledge is significant for corporate innovation practices (Love et al. 2014). Supporting the sketches of popular literature and Bogers et al. (2018, this research focuses on how external expertise can be combined with internal coordinating organizational knowledge. stress in their groundbreaking contributions the ability to assimilate as a material of creativity and bring it out of the ability to perceive, learn and use information to manipulate the environment.

The incorporation of external information is a dominant subject in the literature about an absorptive potential that offers innovation efficiency of organizations perceived as being capable of absorbing knowledge outside of the organization (Schildt et al. 2012). Absorption ability leads to the variety of external information at all levels of the organization and the level of collaboration (Schildt et al. 2012). Further, the degree of effect of SMEs' absorption capability on their ability to take advantage of the flow of external information is not of great interest in empirical literature, although the theoretical model is important for the flow of knowledge as a precedent and innovation as a result (Chesbrough 2003).

The knowledge acquisition is possible by firms through the sources of market and science based forces. Except some studies (De Zubielqui et al. 2016; Moilanen et al. 2014; Raisal et al. 2018), examinations that really exists, does not extricate between different elements of external flows of knowledge (eg, customers, suppliers, competitors, universities and other research institute.)(Audretsch et al. 2014; Kostopoulos et al. 2011). It does not benefit a group of external flows of knowledge from diverse sources, since there are significant changes among them, which add to researcher considerate of their relationship to the absorption capacity, the outcome of innovation and firm performance. And all sorts of collaborators, including clients, manufacturers, rivals and research and development manufacturers, universities and other needs (Grandinetti 2016). In addition, the necessity for integrating activities with suitable methods for motivation depends on the types of partner. Empirical study still lacks the results on potential integrative examination of external knowledge inflows, absorptive capacity, innovation, as well as performance indicators (Weerasinghe and Jayawardane 2015). However, while the SMEs are actively undertaking innovation practices to

increase the outcome of innovation (Kostopoulos et al. 2011; Lane et al. 2006), Most SMEs don't know how transparency affects the capability of SMEs to innovate and take advantage of external sources (Weerasinghe and Jayawardane 2015). There is a lack of structure to inspect the effect of outside information flows on output of SMEs, with few exceptions (De Zubielqui et al. 2016). This study aims to explore a framework work to boost the efficiency of SMEs with absorptive ability and innovation.

## **2. Theoretical basis for this Study**

Study on the growth and success of SMEs inundated with numerous hypotheses adapted by researchers in hypothesizing linkages and constructs. Adapted different set of views may specify a lack of generality among SMEs in the growth and performance theories. Perhaps this is a direct consequence of the multifaceted environment of development and efficiency studies for SMEs. The past pattern gives the feeling that researchers are progressively adjusting a few theories in the advancement of their study (Wiklund et al. 2009).

### **2.1 Resource-Based Theory (RBT)**

RBT has turn out to be one of the best persuasive and refereed concepts in the history of the administration arena(Barney et al. 2011). RBV indicates that a company has valuable capital and expertise range (Wernerfelt 1984), and Various tools and competencies might have a stronger influence on organization's performance (Sirmon et al. 2011). Innovation is one of the key factors that influences company growth and development, as it enables businesses to turn their diverse capabilities in a more agile way.

The company's continuance is intensely relying upon its assets and abilities to make competitive advantages (Gu et al. 2016). Accordingly, RBV reflects about that organizations must use their assets and capacities proficiently and build up their new assets and abilities to support competitive advantages(Sirmon et al. 2011). RBV also considers external as well as internal elements to improve productivity and exploit creativity to build unique business capabilities and expertise (Barney et al. 2011) . The focal reason for RBT is to decide performance contrasts amid contending firms that credited to the distinctions in their assets (Gu et al. 2016).

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1 Design**

A systematic narrative synthesis literature review was conducted because the methodologies of the studies included were unsuitable for a statistical description of the studies. Whittemore and Knafl (2005) suggested an integrative process. In conjunction with these approaches, various views on a particular phenomenon of concern are best understood (Whittemore and Knafl 2005).

### **3.2 Search strategy**

The search included the following on-line database SCOPUS (through EBSCOhost). The search period included articles published between 2002 and 2020 in order to select recent studies that may have more relevance to the current practices.

### **3.3 Inclusion criteria**

Study inclusion requirements were: (1) articles published in English, (2) studies investigating the impact of External Knowledge Inflows on Performance with the mediation effect of Absorptive Capacity, Innovations (3) quantitative or qualitative research designs, (4) peer reviewed research.

## **4. Conceptual framework**

### **4.1 External knowledge Inflows and Absorptive Capacity**

Companies invested in the development of an internal knowledge R&D portfolio are well capable of identifying and evaluating their access to external sources and, in effect, assimilating and leveraging their information and relationship sources (Berchicci 2013). Although the absorptive potential is interconnected with the R&D power and related to it, its estimation presents a variety of problems defining the present situation. Next, the internal production of new knowledge and the external acquisition of new knowledge should be specifically divided to capture the absorption potential (Henderson and Clark 1990). Without this distinction, the impact of the absorptive capacity is difficult to assess.

### **4.2 Potential Absorptive Capacity (PACAP) Realized Absorptive Capacity (RACAP)**

Cohen and Levinthal (1990) describe ACAP as a collection of organizational processes and practices through which firms gather, integrate, reshape and mobilize information to build learning organization. This work uses the re-conceptualization suggested by Zahra and George (2002), which classified absorptive capacity into "Potential Absorptive Capacity (PACAP) and Realized Absorptive Capacity" (RACAP) components.

PACAP acquisition and assimilation initiates a "firm's capacity to appreciate and gain external information, but does not guarantee that this information will be used. Transformation and application of RACAP represents the willingness of the company to harness information already acquired" (Zahra et al. 2006). Argote et al. (2003) propose that knowledge only is insufficient; firms want tools to take advantage of acceptable this information entrenched in new management innovation. Consequently, "the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge may occur but does not

guarantee the successful transformation and utilization of information" (Leal-Rodríguez et al. 2014). Nonetheless, Ali and Park (2016) claim that the higher PACAP level results in the higher RACAP level, and it happens in a series manner.

#### **4.3 Absorptive Capacity and Innovation**

Ali and Park (2016) conducted an analysis with the sample of 347 from Korea's various manufacturing sectors. The results indicate that "PACAP" and "RACAP" take place sequentially and have unswerving impact on creativity in management. The aim of absorption ability is to change companies to understand the business benefits of external learning, generally within the form of innovation outcomes (Cohen and Levinthal 1989). Tsai (2001) noted that absorption potential can contribute to the implementation of a company's advancement by functioning as a platform for new external knowledge and as a way to move learning within a company that can promote cross-hierarchical development.

#### **4.4 External knowledge inflows from market- and science-based actors, absorptive capacity, and innovation**

While the ability to interpret, acquire and acclimatize external knowledge with internal information activities, it empowers the organization to build another, extended learning basis and, inter alia, build and enhance its absorption cap. The existing data will be used and translated into existing goods, services or processes (Zahra and George 2002) to produce significant firm results (Kostopoulos et al. 2011). Be that as it may, there is a scarcity of observational proof on whether absorptive limit makes an interpretation of outside learning inflows into advancement results (Fosfuri and Tribó 2008), especially when it comes to SMEs.

Moreover, Kostopoulos et al. (2011) provided observational care to the interceding role of absorption capability in the link among external information inflows (from providers, customers, contenders, colleges, and other research establishments) and advancement. Underlining the key hypothetical supposition of absorptive capacity hypothesis that, with the end goal for ventures to get development benefits from new outside learning, they should perceive the estimation of this information, disguise it and endeavor it.

#### **4.5 Management Innovation and Technical Innovation**

Researchers for a protracted time have been attentive to the tight linkage between organizational and technical innovations (Damanpour and Evan 1984). However, management innovation's role in the promotion of technological innovation has been theoretically projected (Battisti and Stoneman 2010), there is no clear scientific proof. A research by Damanpour and Aravind (2012) could be a rare exception. Their longitudinal analysis of a number of libraries in the U.S. indicates that over time, administrative innovation encourages technological innovation. A few studies stress

the complementarity of organizational and technological advances (Martínez-Ros and Labeaga 2009), proving the synergy among the ways of advancement makes them complementary rather than substitution processes.

#### **4.6 Management Innovation, Technical Innovation, and Firm Performance**

Administrative advancements are accepted to assume an urgent role in creating techniques for development, encouraging authoritative change and restoration, and empowering nonstop performance (Damanpour and Aravind 2012). Despite the context of the review, managerial and hierarchical procedures play a significant role in concentrated edge and firmness (Mothe and Thi 2010). Performance actuated by utilizing specialized and administrative knowledge assets together prompts the presentation of various advancement types in various subsystems (Birkinshaw and Mol 2006).

Nonetheless, the use of longitudinal information out of 1,435 Australian SMEs (Gronum et al. 2012) observed a direct correlation among both innovation and firm success, it warns that SMEs would concentrate exclusively on creating and sustaining outside relations if they contribute to developments. Rosenbusch et al. (2011) have inspected the connection between the management innovation accomplices and firm success and discovered that extensive and serious commitment to non-contesting accomplices. Similar to clients, consultancy and open research foundations are positively identified with firm execution. A subject ascending from the ongoing writing at that point is the need to recognize contrasting sorts of outside development joint efforts, since, as noted over, the sorts of outer accomplices SMEs work together with might influence execution (Gronum et al. 2012)

Coad and Rao (2008) have obviously examined the connection amid innovation and growth of SMEs concerning innovative areas in USA. They learned that a firm, mostly, may encounter just unobtrusive growth and may develop for various reasons that may or not identified with imaginativeness.

Freel (2000) found that trend-setters are probably going to develop more than non-pioneers. He found that trend-setters represented a bigger extent of those firms, which might be named Super Growth, and a littler extent of declining firms.

Marques et al. (2009) investigated the elements that add to the structure of a firm's inventive limit and surveyed the manner by which this adds to enhancements in the firm's performance of SMEs in Portugal. They found that more prominent a firm's creative ability the better is its success.

Despite the fact that the above discussion focuses to a rich connection among inventiveness and performance, there is an inclination to place that inside the SME setting, a firm's creativity in view of the board advancement will increase a firm's exhibition. Exact proof that inventiveness is a significant connector or determinant of firm performance exists

(Klomp and Van Leeuwen 2001), proving that trend-setters are industrially more competitive than non-trend-setters (Laursen and Salter 2006).

Further, a significant part of the academic and professional writing on the management innovation features the benefits of receptiveness and a conceivable positive outcome on an undertaking's business achievement and financial strength (West and Bogers 2014). Moreover, Mazzola (2012) attempted to investigate direct influence of twelve Various modes of open innovation have shown that their effect on the company's results can be optimistic as well as negative.

It is proposed that creativity be the way for an organization to improve its operational efficiency (Al-Ansari et al. 2013). Many previous research on the innovation-performance relationship acknowledges that performance is positively affected by innovation (Ukko et al. 2017).

## **5. Development of integrative framework**

The proposed integrated structure is shown in Figure 1. Drawing from the resource based view and the literature examined in the previous section. The review of the literature on the effect of external information inflows on the outcome of SMEs indicates that the company's success is likely to be related to external market-and science-based engagement with SMEs in order to acquire knowledge (De Zubielqui et al. 2016; Moilanen et al. 2014).

The resource-based view argues that the owner / manager of SMEs with the adequate flow of external resource with internal capacity are more likely to generate innovation and leads the firm towards the improved performance (Pradana et al. 2020). With the help of external relations, SMEs is to use the sources of knowledge outside the firm (Durst and Edvardsson 2012) that should support their growth and performance (Grandinetti 2016; McKelvie and Wiklund 2010). Similarly, with external resources, enterprises can overcome the limitations of the resource and ensure the adequate inflow of knowledge for the firms to grow and perform well (Teirlinck and Spithoven 2013).

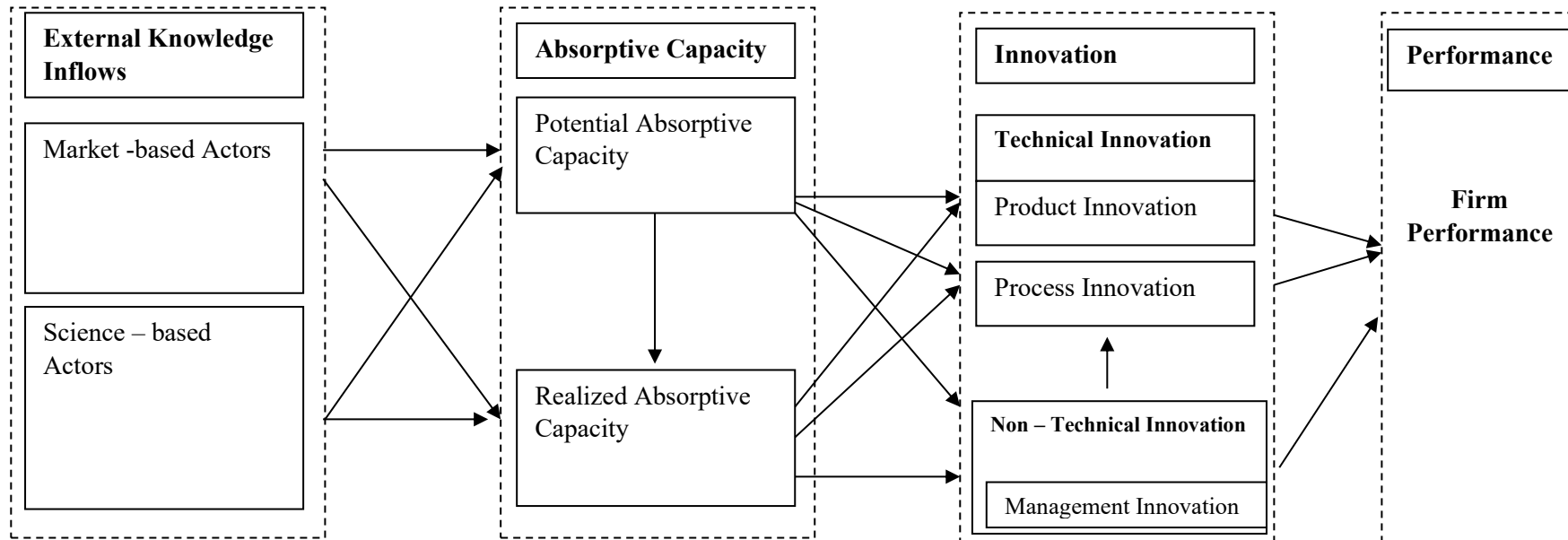


Figure 1: Proposed Integrative frame work



## 6. Conclusion

This research offers an integrative context that involves external information inflows, capability absorption, creativity and firm output. This could be adopted by many SMEs to enhance their organizational performance. This study therefore opted for the source-resource and capability-performance paradigm to examine the effect of external and internal sources and the resulting capabilities and resources on SME's innovation leading to its performance by focusing on market and science-based actors input in providing information on their needs and experiences, and cooperative networks in transmitting resources and capabilities and with absorptive capability. Moreover, this integrative framework will serve as a basic platform to examine the SMEs performance.

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