The determinants of knowledge transfer in asymmetric strategic alliances: the case of Moroccan SMEs.

ABEDLHAKIM EL JADDAOUI

Research teacher The polydisciplinary faculty of TAZA USMBA Fez. Entrepreneurship and Organizational Management (EAOM) Morocco
Abdelhakim.eljaddaoui@usmba.ac.ma

EL HAMMOUMI AHMED

Doctoral student Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences Fez
University sidi Med ben Abdallah Fès Entrepreneurship and Organizational Management (EAOM)
Morocco

Abstrait:

This article presents an empirical study aimed at determining the key factors for successful knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs involved in asymmetric strategic alliances with foreign partners. In the light of the literature, and on the basis of the Szulanski model, we proposed seven research hypotheses which were tested, using regression analysis, on a sample of 108 strategic alliances made by Moroccan SMEs, for the 2010-2018 reporting period. The results show that four factors have a positive effect on knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs: the characteristics of knowledge being transferred, receptor engagement, receptor absorption capacity, and the transfer mechanisms used. While the moderator variable, business sector" does not influence the transfer process.

Keywords: knowledge transfer, asymmetric strategic alliances, Moroccan SMEs.

Introduction:

The national private sector is not very developed, it does not have sufficient financial capacity for the internal development of its competences, and it must reorganize and challenge itself. Moroccan companies must form partnerships with foreign companies; they need a real transfer of technology and organizational learning. Thus, strategic alliances appear as a model of inter-company collaboration (Todeva and Konoe 2005, Ferreira et al. 2004) allowing companies to create value through the sharing of a range of possible resources (Anand and Khanna, 2000), to target

market control (Kosa and Lewin, 1998), or accession to new markets (Harzing, 2002).

Recent studies show that SMEs do not rely on strategic alliances to improve their competitive capacity (Hoffman & Schlosser, 2001, Haagedorn & Schakenraad, 1994), their propensity to forge alliances is less than that of large firms (Hoffman & Schlosser, 2001), a particular problem for Morocco, where SMEs and SMIs account for 95% of the economic fabric (according to HCP statistics in 2018).

Indeed, the strategic alliances of Moroccan companies with companies from industrialized countries are asymmetrical

alliances, since they mainly concern companies from developed countries on the one hand with companies from a developing country (Morocco) on the other hand, with objectives such as the transfer of technology and the conquest of markets (Mouline, 2005), these companies having non similar strategic positions that aim to achieve technological mastery, industrial and technical skills and knowledge, and financial and business capabilities (Cherbib & Assenc, 2008).

It is in this context that our research aims to identify the factors that promote or hinder the transfer of knowledge to SMEs involved in strategic alliances.

I. The theoretical framework of our work:

The work on inter-organizational knowledge transfer will enable us to understand this process in the context of asymmetrical alliances between companies in developed countries and SMEs in developing countries. Knowledge transfer appears to be a major reason for the development of asymmetric strategic alliances, given the increasing importance of organizational learning in the competitiveness and performance of organizations. The transfer of knowledge to the dissemination of best practices within the organization with the aim of maximizing productivity on the one hand (intra-organizational transfer) and aims to transfer knowledge to other entities with the aim of facilitating and streamlining the management of inter organizational relations (inter organizational transfer). Szulanski (1999) defined transfer as "the exchange of organizational knowledge consists of an exact or partial replication of a network of coordination relationships linking specific resources in such a way that a set of different resources, but not very similar in nature is coordinated by an identical relationship network»

Indeed, Szulanski synthesized the overall concept of knowledge transfer, as a dyadic process of exchange of organizational knowledge between two entities, and that the effectiveness of this process depended on the following factors: the issuer's emission capacity, receptor absorption capacity, knowledge characteristics and context characteristics.

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of knowledge transfer to SMEs involved in strategic alliances with foreign partners, we propose a model that integrates the different factors that can impact the transfer process. Figure N°1 illustrates the theoretical model that is based on: factors that can promote or hinder knowledge transfer, the industry sector that can moderate knowledge transfer, and knowledge transfer as an outcome variable.

Figure 1: Theoretical model of factors affecting knowledge transfer to SMEs. Conceptual model and research assumptions ;
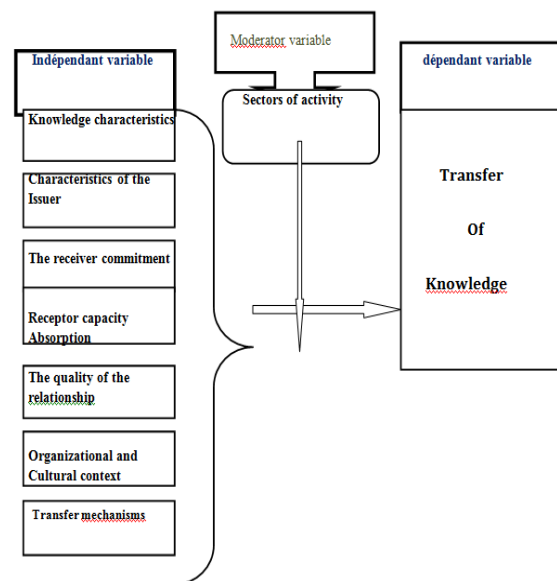
1.1. Factors influencing the success of knowledge transfer to SMEs:
1.1.1. The characteristics of knowledge subject to transfer:

Knowledge is the object of the transfer studied in the framework of our research, it occupies a central place in management theories and considered by several authors as a privileged source of competitive advantage. (Kogut&Zander, 1992; Conner& Prahalad, 1996).

Polanyi (1980) distinguished two types of knowledge, explicit knowledge that is codifiable and easily transferable, and tacit knowledge that cannot be codified and difficult to transfer, and their teaching to an individual or organizational entity presupposes a set of adaptation and put into play transfer mechanisms allowing a richer communication such as teamwork or staff exchange.

According to an empirical study, Levin and Cross, 2004, Simonin, 1999, Szulanski et al, 2004, Coff et al. 2006, Wijik et al. 2008, identified the causal ambiguity of knowledge as one of the most important impediments to knowledge transfer, this ambiguity intervenes to stop the imitation of knowledge especially the most strategic. In this context, Mudambi (2002) considered the foreign firm as a network of knowledge that conveys and transfers three types of knowledge according to their degree of hermeticism (Lam, 1997; Nonaka&Takeuchi, 1995; Spender, 1996), of complexity (Szulanski, 2004), of ambiguity (Simonin, 1999), and according to the hierarchical level to which they belong (Hedlund, 1994; Lubatkin, Florin&Lane, 2001).

Based on these theoretical and empirical writings around the knowledge characteristics to be transferred, we anticipate, as a first hypothesis relating to the main issue of our research. H1: the characteristics of the knowledge to be transferred will influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs.

1.1.2. Characteristics related to the issuer:

The issuer is one of the actors of knowledge transfer, it is the company that carries out the transfer, it is a trigger of this process. In this context, the issuer must possess certain characteristics to succeed in the transfer process, namely:
-the commitment of the issuer: is an important condition to facilitate the transfer, this commitment is measured by the duration of the relationship envisaged i.e. the time and staff devoted to the transfer (Simonin, 2004).

- The control of transfer processes: indeed, the ability of the issuer to carry out the transfer depended on its level of mastery of knowledge to be transferred (Szulanski, 2000).

-the control of the informal by the issuer: successful transfer of tacit knowledge presupposes mastery of the management of the informal aspects of this knowledge.

The mastery of the informal is measured by the existence of a share of knowledge perceived as tacit in the body of knowledge transferred (Kogut & Zander, 1993; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998), this mastery presupposes reciprocal absorptive capacities between the two partners to formalize specific aspects of knowledge in order to make them compatible with the receptor context. This context can be defined according to a set of dimensions such as culture, strategy, decision-making process, environment and technology

(Inkpen, Dinur, 1998), or more particularly according to actors, the tasks they perform and the tools they use (Argote, Ingram, 2000).

-the issuer's perception of cultural differences between its organization and that of the receiver: however, the existence of strong cultural differences between the receiver and the issuer will lead the latter to implement specific transfer tools to match the organizational context and the knowledge to be transferred in order to overcome these differences organizational and national cultures (Szulanski, 2000).

-the perception by the issuer of the absorption capacity of the receiver: the absorption capacity is an essential component of the transfer; it measures by the capacity of the firm to acquire knowledge, to assimilate it, and to use it for value creation purposes (Cohen, Levinthal, 1990). If we accept that the characteristics of the issuer are a determining factor in the transfer of knowledge to SMEs in strategic alliances, we can anticipate a second hypothesis related to our research problem:

H2: The characteristics of the issuer will influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances.

1.1.3. Factors related to receptor characteristics:

The receiver is one of the actors of knowledge transfer in inter-organizational relations, it is the company that receives the knowledge transmitted (Szulanski, 2000).

The success of knowledge transfer processes reflects both the commitment of the receiver as measured by the time and staff devoted to this purpose (Simonin, 2004), and its ability to adapt its organizational context to the knowledge transferred as measured by absorption capacity (Inkpen& Dinur, 1998; Baum& Ingram, 1998; Szulanski, 2000).

➢ The receiver engagement:

The commitment does not result in the signing of a contract that sees only part of the social interactions, but in the willingness of each partner to make available to the community the mechanisms necessary for the success of knowledge transfer. The commitment is then explained by the goodwill towards the partners and the moral obligation that makes possible the sustainability of the relationship, and reflects the desire to maintain the relationship for a long time, enabling a climate of trust to facilitate knowledge transfer.

In this context, Inkpen (1996) has shown that engagement plays a role as a facilitator of knowledge sharing. Haffmen (2000) considered it to be a source of sustainability of competitive advantage. Mohr & Spekman (1996) argue that engagement provides partners with a supportive environment to achieve their individual and collective goals without the emergence of the specter of opportunistic behavior. This pendent, receptor engagement in knowledge transfer is measured by the amount of time and staff devoted to it, and its acceptance to adapt its organizational context according to the knowledge transferred.

For our part, we base ourselves on this literature and formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Receiver engagement will promote knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances.

➢ The absorption capacity:

Absorptive capacity is considered a key factor in knowledge transfer. Several authors (Lyles & Salk, 1996; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000) have emphasized that absorption capacity influences knowledge transfer given its importance in mastering the management of informal knowledge in order to promote the transfer of knowledge to recipient entities. It leads to greater business innovation and determines its competitive advantage, thus numerous studies have shown the link between absorption capacity and improvement in organizational performance (Levinson and Asahi, 1995, Mowery et al, 1996, Mukherjee et al, 2000, Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Responding, Lame, Koka and Pathak (2002) asserted that the emergence of the notion of absorptive capacity coincided with the development of resource-based theory, thus the creation of wealth by enterprises is determined by resources and capacities which are unique, scarce and inimitable (Penrose, 1959, Berney, 1991), some authors have considered that the interactions and connections of enterprises with outside organizations would strengthen the absorptive capacity, and improved transfer performance (Hamel and Pralahad, 1989, Hamel, 1991, Levinson and Asahi, 1995). A new conceptualization of absorption capacity has been proposed by Zahra and George (2002) based on the three stages mentioned by Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and by proposing a 4th necessary for the application of knowledge, namely the transformation, these stages are: acquisition, assimilation, transformation and exploitation. In the literature on absorptive capacities, new conceptualizations have been observed integrating staff skills and motivation (Minbeava & Michailova, 2004) as well as prior knowledge (Lane, Salk & Lyles, 2001), the relevance of knowledge , the resemblance of organizational structures and shared research communities (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998). Indeed, for an effective absorption capacity, individuals must have the capacity and the will to absorb the transferred knowledge, in this sense the motivation of employees remains a mandatory condition in the deployment of skills, in the achievement and realization. of their abilities. Based on this literature, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: Absorption capacity will promote knowledge transfer to SMEs in strategic alliances.

1.1.4. The nature of the relationship between the partners:

According to Perez-Nordtvedt et al. 2008; Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Reagans and McEvily, 2003), the quality of the relationship between the receiver and the sender plays a preponderant role in the success of knowledge transfer, it is measured on the one hand, by the quality of communication between the partners, and d on the other hand, by the degree of relationship between the source and the recipient, strong and based on trust, credibility, motivation and shared intentions.

Continuous communication:

In strategic alliances, communication between partners is encouraged and favored through the creation of specific structures dedicated to the relationship (Carr & Pearson, 1999). In this context, Mohr & Spekman (1994), asserted that the important aspects of communication are:

the quality of communication, the extent of information sharing, and participation in planning and goal setting. These aspects improve the performance of partners thanks to the multiplication of points of contact, and make it possible to promote the non-redundancy and diversity of the information exchanged, and consequently promotes the fluidity of the exchange of information and its reliability.

Motivation and commitment:

The reciprocal commitment of two partners in the transfer process is measured by the duration of the relationship envisaged by the receiver and the sender (Simonin, 2004), and by the receptivity to external sources of information (Hamel, 1991), this receptivity is expressed by the amount of time and personnel devoted by the sender to transfers (Simonin, 2004) and by the acceptance by the receiver to adapt his organizational context according to the knowledge transferred. As for motivation, it is considered an important factor for the transfer of knowledge and know-how, it is at the heart of organizational learning, indeed the lack of motivation can block the transfer process (Perez-Nordtredt et al. al. 2008). For Ipe (2003), there is a positive relationship between incentives and the success of knowledge transfer. Similarly, Kalling (2003), Xu & Ma (2008) found that individuals will work harder to try to learn new knowledge, when they are motivated to learn. Narteh (2008) in turn argues that motivation is linked to reward, and finds that individuals tend to participate actively in the process of knowledge transfer when they are rewarded. "The intention to learn:

Is an important factor for the success of knowledge transfer processes (Inkpen,

2000; Tsong, 2002; Mazloomi & Jolly, 2013). It is defined by Tsong (2002) as the level of desire, will and actual commitment of the receiver in relation to the learning of knowledge transferred by the sender. Indeed, according to (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008; Perez-Nordtvedt et al. 2008), the receiver will be better prepared psychologically to learn and assimilate the required knowledge, when he intends to learn and to acquire knowledge transmitted by the foreign partner.

Similarly, Quigley et al. (2007) state that when individuals in the receiving entity set high learning goals, the efficiency of knowledge transfer increases. The same goes for Narteh (2008), who suggests that the intention of a clear and strong learning on the part of the beneficiary is a key factor to improve the transfer, and the quality of the transferred knowledge.

➤ Credibility and trust:

According to Ko et al. (2005), credibility is the way in which a receiver of knowledge perceives the sender as trustworthy and reputable. As for trust, it is considered by Inkpen (1998) as the belief that the source's word is reliable and that it will fulfill its obligation to transfer knowledge. Indeed, the credibility and reliability of the beneficiary improve the quality of the knowledge to be transferred and reduce the cost of the transfer. Similarly, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) asserted that trust facilitates knowledge transfer. Ipe (2003) investigated the impact of trust on knowledge transfer and suggests that the trustworthy source creates a foundation for learning, essential for effective knowledge transfer. Similarly for Inkpen and Pien (2006), in their study on the impact of trust on collaboration and knowledge transfer,

found that trust considerably influences the extent of knowledge transfer as well as the efficiency with which knowledge is exchanged.

In turn, Park and Ghauri (2011) have suggested that lack of trust is more likely to lead to misunderstandings, confusion and anxiety that reduce the level of collaboration and therefore hamper knowledge transfer. On the basis of this literature, we formulate a fifth hypothesis:

H5: The quality of the relationship with the foreign partner will influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in a situation of strategic alliances.

1.1.5. Factors related to the organizational context:

Organizational context measures the degree of organizational integration between the sender and receiver of knowledge (Cummings & Teng, 2003). Thus organizational differences often create obstacles to knowledge transfer. Similarly, Simonin (1999) argued that organizational distance generates additional difficulties and challenges in the knowledge transfer process. However, for knowledge transfer to be successful there must be compatibility between the transferred knowledge and the organizational context of the recipient.

Inkper & Dinur (1998) show that the more the contextual variables of the receiver are similar to those of the sender, the more the realization of transfer will be facilitated and the more it will be likely to lead to success, because it can facilitate the matching of knowledge and organizational context of the receiver. On the basis of this literature, we formulate a sixth hypothesis:

H6: The organizational context will influence the transfer of knowledge to SMEs involved in strategic alliances.

1.1.6. Knowledge Transfer mechanisms:

On the basis of an analysis of the literature, some past research on transfer defines lists of tools taking into account four dimensions, namely: the type of knowledge that can be transmitted, the extent of the communication authorized by the 'tool, the cost of the tool and mobilization of resources, and the possibility of adapting the knowledge to the context of the recipient (adjustment and feedback possible). These dimensions allow to qualify with more precision the different types of tools, and to define tools allowing a greater or lesser interaction between the transmitter and the receiver. In this context, organizations can use a set of mechanisms to ensure the transfer of all knowledge (Almeida and Grant, 1998, Berthon (2001), Prévôt (2005) among which we can cite: documents , annual meetings and forums, telephone and fax, the common information system, visits to workplaces either by the sender or by the receiver, face-to-face meetings between the staff of the entities, work in team, the creation of a team responsible for managing the relationship, the setting up of training programs by the issuing entity and the exchange of personnel for a fixed period. These tools are not exhaustive, but they are the most frequently used in the process of transferring and sharing knowledge. Our objective is to know to what extent the transfer tools influence this one? To this end we formulate a seventh hypothesis:

H7: The transfer mechanisms used will influence the transfer of knowledge to

Moroccan SMEs involved in strategic alliances.

The literature review led us to formulate working hypotheses which represent a provisional response ready for empirical validation.

1.2. Knowledge transfer:

Knowledge is the most important and strategic source for a business (Nonaka, 1994). The concept of knowledge transfer is particularly important because it is central to the definition of a business. Indeed, according to Zander & Kogut (1995, p: 76) companies are defined as "social communities which use their relational structure and shared coding schemes in order to improve the transfer and communication of new skills and capacities".

". The transfer allows the integration and coordination of specific knowledge (Grant, 1996), it allows the internal dissemination of knowledge and know-how (Zander & Kogut, 1995), it is also considered a condition for the creation of new knowledge. However, some studies have explored the value of inter-organizational knowledge sharing, affirming that the company that knows how to manage and organize partnerships with PD companies is more efficient at the learning level, it must develop know-how. Cooperation by concluding strategic alliances. In the context of SMEs involved in strategic alliances, the success of knowledge transfer depends on their level of acquisition, which is particularly crucial for their success, given the large knowledge gap between SMEs in developing countries and companies in developing countries. . In this article, based on the results of this research, we study the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs involved in strategic alliances by determining these key success factors. This transfer should be evaluated on the basis of the work of Sako (2004) and Kotabe et al. (2003), and adapting them to the receptor, to develop a four-item scale assessing the degree of knowledge acquisition by the receiving entity, the degree of resolution of technical problems, improvement of existing knowledge, development of new knowledge, and use of transferred knowledge in other projects.

The sector of activity as a moderating factor of knowledge transfer:

The choice of multisectoral analysis allows us a significant capacity for generalization and an improvement in the external validity of the research, it thus allows us to compare previous studies since the majority of skills and know-how transfer studies focus on a single sector of activity. In this context, Guallino (2010) draws on the study of Ingram and Baum (1997) to explain that the characteristics of the activity sector can influence the process of knowledge transfer and development. Thus according to Prévôt (2005), knowledge practices differ depending on the activity sector.

In our research, we seek to master the variable of the sector of activity in order to map the different transfer practices and their consequences, indeed and according to Thietart et ali. (2007), the control of external variation makes it possible to improve the internal validity of the research.

2. Empirical framework:

After having identified our conceptual model, we will try to confront it with the reality of our empirical field of

investigation which remains a necessary step to answer our main question initially posed.

2.1. Data collection:

After having developed the questionnaire to approach the field of our research, we undertook the second step to test this questionnaire on a limited sample. Validating this questionnaire by ensuring the consistency of these questions, we set out to collect primary data.

As part of our research, Moroccan SMEs in a strategic alliance with foreign partners are the target of our investigation.

We specify that the questionnaire will be administered to executives, marketing managers, production managers, and managers of Moroccan SMEs in a strategic alliance situation, who have information on strategic alliances.

In our research, we decided to address ourselves to SMEs operating in different and geographically dispersed industrial activity sectors in order to ensure that our model is not influenced by other variables omitted in the literature.

We proceeded by face-to-face survey by contacting SMEs directly through our relational network, We distributed around 420 questionnaires and we received 142 responses, i.e. a response rate of 33.8%, after verification we kept 108 exploitable questionnaires, which constitutes an acceptable sample to carry out our research and give acceptable resu.

2.2. Data processing and research results:

We first checked the validity and reliability of the variables in our research model using a principal component analysis (PCA) according to the groups of items taken into account in the knowledge transfer process.

We then presented a multivariate analysis method to test the causal links between the dependent and the independent variables.

2.2.1. The measurement model:

Using the PCA, we verified the validity and reliability of the measurement scales of our theoretical model, in order to simplify all the data. PCA makes it possible to redefine the model variables according to the following four steps (Evrard et al., 2003):

-the verification of the feasibility of the factorial analysis through the Bartlett sphericity test which is based on the null hypothesis of correlation between the variables, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) which indicates whether the correlations between the different variables used for the PCA are high enough to allow the determination of the principal components.

When the KMO is greater than 0.8, it means that the factor structure is intelligible and stable and that the factorability is good. If the 0.5 <KMO <0.8 we can conclude that the factorability is acceptable, while the factorial structure is difficult to interpret and that the factorability is bad if the KMO is less than 0.5.

- determining the number of factors to be retained from all of the initial variables. We eliminate step by step the items with a low contribution (less than or equal to 0.500) on the principal component (s) identified (Evrard et al. 2003). Each PCA is rotate orthogonal Varimax, which makes it possible to artificially increase the value of the correlation coefficients of the most correlated variables and decrease that of the less correlated variables.

- checking the reliability of the factors of each PCA, by evaluating the consistency between the items supposed to measure the same concept (Igalens and Roussel, 1998; Pittenger, 2003). According to Evrard et al. (2003) and Pittenger (2003), a reliable scale produces the same results on repeated measurements, regardless of the context in which the test is performed.

We use Cronbach's alpha coefficient in our research, because it allows us to measure the reliability of different questions supposed to measure the same

phenomenon (Evrard et al., 2000). An alpha greater than 0.6 is acceptable in exploratory studies (Evrard et al., 2003).

- the reputation of each component and the redefinition of the research hypotheses to obtain a refined research model at the end of the factor analysis. Table 1 presents the summary of the results of the principal component analysis of the explanatory and explained variables, as well as the value of Cronbach's Alpha and the percentage of the explained variance of all the components.

Table N°1: the results of the validity of the measurement scales:

Components	Alpha de Cronbach	Items	% de la variance explained	Number of items
Knowledge characteristics	0,755	- The tacit level of knowledge. -the degree of specificity. -the degree of complexity.	67,438	3
Transmitter characteristics	0,539	- A willingness to share and communicate knowledge. -the fear of losing exclusive superiority and its sources of influence.	74,148	2
Receiver engagement	0,75	- Degree of involvement in the partnership. -willingness to maintain the relationship. -the importance of partnership.	80%	3
The absorption capacity of the receiver	0,737	- Investment in R&D. -the degree of R&D intensity. -level of education of employees. -level of employee training. -the skills of employees. -compensation of employees. -promotion of employees.	74,56	7
Relationship quality	0,75	- The compatibility of the objectives. -quality of contribution.	60,778	4

		-the power to negotiate. -informal relationship between leaders.		
Organizational and cultural context.	0,557	-the compatibility of national culture. -compatibility of the language of communication. -cultural compatibility with the partner. -management style compatibility. -compatibility of operational mechanisms.	75,563	5
Transfer mechanisms	0,53	-site visit. -use of a common information system. -meeting them face to face. -the use of audit consulting.	65,151	4
Knowledge transfer	0,794	-degree of technology, knowledge and know-how. -the acquisition of knowledge and know-how to solve technical problems. - The acquisition of knowledge and know-how to improve technology, knowledge and know-how. - The acquisition of knowledge and know-how to develop new technologies, knowledge and know-how. -Improvement of product quality	76,542	5

After the purification of the measurement scales, we proceeded to test the hypotheses of our research model.

2.2.2. Hypothesis testing by regression analysis:

The explanatory method used to test the hypotheses of our model is multiple linear regression. This method offers us the opportunity to test our research model as a whole and to determine the importance and significance of each explanatory variable for the variation in knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances with foreign partners. It translates our conceptual model into the following equation:

The transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances = β1 characteristics of knowledge to be transferred + β2 characteristics of the sender + β3 the commitment of the receiver + β4 the absorption capacity of the

receiver + β5 the quality of the relationship between the partners + β6 the organizational context and cultural + β7 transfer mechanisms + ϵ.

The assessment of the overall significance of the model is done with the Fischer statistic, which indicates whether the explanatory variables have an influence on the variable to be explained.

The trade-off is done by comparing the value of the estimated F-statistic with that tabulated by Fischer. The SPSS 25 software automatically provides the probability associated with the calculated F-statistic, which greatly facilitates the analysis. It will therefore suffice to compare the probability associated with the F-statistic with the 5% threshold used. If the probability associated with the

calculated F-statistic is less than 5%, then the H0 hypothesis will be rejected in the profile of the alternative hypothesis according to which the regression is globally significant.

In our case, the Fischer statistic calculated by the SPSS25 software is F = 15.845 and the associated probability is less than 5% (0.00 <0.05), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the model is globally significant (table N °2).

This result is consistent with the value of the adjusted R2 statistic (0.454) which also provides information on the quality of the econometric model, and indicates that the transfer factors explain 45.4% of the variance in knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in a situation of strategic alliance. (Table N ° 3)

Table N ° 2: regression index of the ANOVA model

ANOVAa

Modèle		Sum of squares	ddl	Medium square	F	Sig.
1	Régression	14,907	7	2,485	15,845	,000[b]
	de Student	15,837	100	,157		
	Total	30,744	107			

at. Dependent variable: knowledge transfer

b. Preachers: (Constant), characteristic of transfer mechanism, characteristic of relationship, characteristics of the sender, organizational and cultural context, characteristics of knowledge, engagement of receiver, absorptive capacity.

Table N ° 3: coefficients of the significance of the model.

Model summary :

Model	R	R-deux	R-deux adjusted	standard error of estimate	Modify statistics					Durbin-Watson
					Variation of R-deux	Variation of F	ddl1	ddl2	Sig. Variation of F	
1	,696[a]	,485	,454	,39598	,485	15,845	7	100	,000	1,653

at. Predictors: (Constant), characteristics of transfer mechanisms, relationship characteristics, sender characteristic, organizational and cultural context, knowledge characteristics, receptor engagement, receptor absorptive capacity.

b. Dependent variable: knowledge transfer.

2.3. Interpretation of results:

After a regression analysis, four factors are considered to be determining factors in the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in a situation of strategic alliances. These are, first of all, knowledge transfer mechanisms, this factor contributes the most to the explanation of knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs ($\beta = 0.753$, p = 0.00 <1%). It positively impacts the transfer. This result is consistent with our sixth hypothesis (H7) and the expected literature.

Second, we note the positive and decisive contribution of the receiver's engagement on the transfer of knowledge to SMEs in alliance situations ($\beta = 0.324$, p = 0.013 <0.05). Thing which confirms our third hypothesis (H3). Indeed, applying the concept of commitment to a management system promotes transfer and facilitates its process. This commitment relates to involvement in the relationship, the manager's willingness to maintain the relationship as well as the importance of partnership.

Third, we observe the positive and significant impact of the receptor absorption capacity on the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in a situation of strategic alliances with foreign partners ($\beta = 0.287$, p = 0.007 <0.01). Thing which confirms our fourth hypothesis (H4). Indeed, the receptor absorption capacity makes it possible to acquire, assimilate, transform and use the different types of transferred knowledge such as tacit knowledge which is ambiguous and difficult to transfer.

Fourth, we record the positive and significant effect of knowledge characteristics in the process of knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances ($\beta = 0.153$, p = 0.028 <0.05). This is consistent with our first hypothesis (H1).

2.4. Discussion of results relating to the research hypot

The aim of our research is to address the causal relationship between strategic alliances between Moroccan SMEs and knowledge transfer, with a focus on factors that may favour or hinder the transfer process.

Based on a literature review, we have developed a conceptual model highlighting the factors that can influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs involved in strategic alliances. Indeed, the testing of this model in the field, using a multiple regression analysis, allowed us to validate four hypotheses expressing the factors that could significantly influence the transfer of knowledge to SMEs in alliance situations. These are transfer object knowledge characteristics, receptor engagement, receptor absorption capacity and transfer mechanisms. Based on the results of the descriptive and explanatory studies, derived from the use of the SPSS version 25 software, we discuss our theoretical model.

The characteristics of knowledge being transferred promote the transfer of knowledge to SMEs in strategic alliances.

In our research, the result on the characteristics of knowledge and their transfer to Moroccan

SMEs in a situation of strategic alliances goes in the direction of the beginning, and earlier

Work by Szulanski (2000), Zander and Kogut (1995), Inkper (2000) and Nelson and winter

(1982). the result confirms the significant and positive influence of knowledge characteristics on their transfer to SMEs in strategic alliances (P=0.0130.05), thus, the characteristics of knowledge being transferred positively favour the transfer process with a coefficient β=0.153, which is in line with the expectations expressed in our starting hypothesis (H1). For Zander and Kogut (1995), Szulanski (2000), Inkper (2000), Provost (2005), the characteristics of knowledge being transferred may favor or flounder the transfer process given their ambiguous characteristics. This ambiguity depends on the tacit nature, complexity and specificity of knowledge. Indeed, the tacit degree, the degree of specificity, and the degree of complexity of knowledge can influence the transfer process. In this case, the effective transfer of any type of knowledge requires interaction between the issuer and the receiving entity (Maaref, 2014), and the establishment of a climate of trust and mutual transparency (Ghassane, 2014). When collecting data, respondents do not perceive in the same way the tacit nature, specificity and complexity of the knowledge transferred to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances, but the majority of them announce that these characteristics do not display excessive scores.

Receptor engagement promotes knowledge transfer to SMEs in strategic alliances. Receptor engagement has been one of the main factors highlighted by the literature as being highly indispensable for fostering knowledge transfer to SMEs in strategic alliances, it is considered for Mohr & Spekman (1994) as a key factor in partnership strategies. This literature suggests a set of characteristics to facilitate the process of knowledge and know-how transfer. Thus the receiving entity can facilitate the transfer of knowledge through its engagement with its foreign partner, through involvement in the relationship, maintenance and importance of the partnership. Indeed, the commitment of receiver makes it possible to motivate the transmitter to share knowledge and know-how with its ally.

In this research, we also showed that receptor engagement positively and significantly influences knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances. (β=0.324 and p=0.0280.05). This result is in line with previous work.

Our study illustrates the central role of receptor engagement in the process of knowledge transfer, including its willingness to acquire, exploit, transform and use the transferred knowledge for the intended purpose.

Absorption capacity promotes knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances:

Absorption capacity is one of the main factors highlighted by the literature that have a positive effect on the process of knowledge and know-how transfer to the receiving entities.

It enables the acquisition, exploitation, transformation and use of knowledge and skills transferred, by the degree of R&D intensity, by the competence of employees and their motivation. Indeed, a competent receiver is one who has a well-trained staff, with a wider scope of knowledge and technical and managerial experience allowing it to absorb the transferred knowledge and embed it, in order to use it for the intended purpose. Thus, absorption

capacity promotes knowledge transfer and exploitation for the desired purpose.

In this research, we also showed that receptor absorption capacity positively and significantly influences knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances. ($\beta=0.287$ and $p=0.0070.01$). This result is in line with previous work.

Transfer mechanisms promote knowledge transfer to SMEs in strategic alliances.

Transfer mechanisms are considered among the factors that can promote the transfer of knowledge and know-how to

-A .Taghzouti. (2007). « les alliances stratégiques interentreprises : quelles motivations stratégiques des managers des PME marocaines ?université de Lille.

- Alliouat & Taghzouti A. (2007a). « le pilotage stratégique par la valeur des alliances interentreprises : analyse de la performance et des compétences clés dans la conduite d'un accord de coopération » sumposium international EST de Fès Maroc 22-23 Février 2007.
- Alliouat & Taghzouti A. (2007b). « alliances stratégiques et création de valeur : rentabilité, avantage concurrentiel ou légitime ? Vers une analyse croisé des modèles complémentaires » XVIème conférence de l'AIMS Montréal, du 06 -09 JUIN 2007.
- Bartlett, C. A., & Ghoshal, S. (1999). Managing across borders: The transnational solution (Vol. 2). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances with foreign partners. They may facilitate or slow down the transfer process (d'Inglam and Mothe, 2000, Simonin, 2004, Szulanski, 2000, Brewen & Nollen, 1998, Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000, Almeida & Grant, 1998).

In our research, we showed that transfer mechanisms significantly and positively influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances ($\beta=0.735$ and $p=0.000.05$). Indeed, transfer mechanisms have been a major part of the knowledge transfer process, taking into account its strong power of explanation ($\beta=0,735$).

Conclusion:

The results obtained enabled us to validate four hypotheses indicating the factors that influence the transfer of knowledge to Moroccan SMEs, and to reject three others that do not have a significant influence on the transfer process. The validated hypotheses are: the characteristics related to knowledge transfer object (H1), receptor engagement (H3), receptor absorption capacity (H4), and transfer mechanisms (H7). The rejected assumptions are: the characteristics of the transmitter (H2), the quality of the relationship between allies (H5), and the organizational and cultural context (H5).

These results complement or confirm existing research in general. In addition, they shed new light on the success factors of knowledge transfer to Moroccan SMEs in strategic alliances with foreign partners. And they have made it possible to propose a model of the determinants of knowledge transfer to SMEs involved in strategic alliances.

Bibliographie :

- Beamish, P. (1985), « The characteristics of joint ventures in developing countries »,

- Bellon,B et alii (2000) « alliances et réseaux industriels euro-méditerranéens » ; & March, accords (1963) A behavioral theory of the capacité et logiques firm. Englewood Cliffs, NJ. et Deghfoussi, A. (2004). « absorptive capacity and the implementation of knowledge K.(2006)(1997) alliance stratégiques SA la réussite de l'alliance chez les entreprises jordano-libanaise... BRMalghi, D (1993) Powell W. W.(1983) All iron cage research Collective Mati&r, Holiday, 450-470 and (1996) inter alliance through the process of organizational... Social Review, 48(2), 147 innovation, Techno culture: 16(6), Bl0zerr, M. ch, y&u Praha Academy of management, Minguia, 38, 783, no 22... search and for social structure paradig The Strategic, V Max2003 ...embords Journal, 12(6), 145-164 del nosurcoiology Esplait0. d'absorption »XII metrie (2000)erence dealtAJM 8e3-6 juin... Obique WdeB. création de la valeur », & John Dunk R. E. (1991). Beating Murphy's law. Sloan Management Review, 32(3), 5-16.
- Cohen,M, Levinthal D.A, 1990, Absorptive capacity : a new prespective on learning and innovation, administrative science quarterly, 35,p 128-152;
- Columbia Journal of World Business, Fall.
- Contractor, F. et Lorange, P. (2002), « Cooperative strategies in international business
- Cooperative strategies in international business: joint ventures and technology partnerships between firms »,

- edition Emerald Group Publishing, 2002.
- Galbraith, C. S. (1990). Transferring core manufacturing technologies in high-technology firms. California Management Review, 32(4), 56-70.
- Hamdouch A. (1998) « concurrence et coopération inter firmes » Economie appliquée Tome 11N°1P7-51. Université sidi Med ben abdallâh FSJES Fès
- Hamel, G. (1991). Competition for competence and interpartner learning within international strategic alliances. Strategic management journal, 12(S1), 83-103.
- Harrigan K. (1986), « Strategic alliances and partner asymmetries », p.205-226, in, «
- Inkpen, A. (1998), « Learning, Knowledge Acquisition, and strategic alliances »,
- Jenson R, et Szulanski G.(2004). « stickiness and the adaptatrion of organizational practices in cross-border knowledge transfert" journal f international business studies, vol. 35, N°6,p 508-521.

  joint ventures and technology partnerships between firms », edition International business management.
- Kedia, B. L., & Bhagat, R. S. (1988). Cultural constraints on transfer of technology across nations: Implications for research in international and comparative management. Academy of Management Review, 13(4), 559-571.

- Kogut B, et Zander U. (1993). « Knowledge of the firm and the evolutionary theory of the multinational" journal of international business studies, vol 24,N° 4, p 625-645.
- Kostova, T. (1999). Transnational transfer of strategic organizational practices: A contextual perspective. Academy of management review, 24(2), 308-324.
- Nelson, R. & Winter, S. (1982). 308-324onary theory of economic change, Cambridge, Mass, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Lane, P. J., & Lubatkin, M. (1998). Relative absorptive capacity and interorganizational learning. Strategic management journal, 19(5), 461-477.
- Laurent veybel & Parick Priem: le knowledge management : « la gestion des connaissances au
- Oubrahim A.& Benlahcen TlemçaniM.(2019). « l'instabilité des alliances stratégiques : approche par le changement organisationnel : Essai d'analyse et revue de littérature. » revue Isg :N°2 janvier 2019. service de de la performance »
- Laval, F., Guilloux, V., & Kalika, M. (1998). La GRH face à la globalisation: le cas des relations client-fournisseur franco-marocaines. Congrès de l'AGRH, Université de Versailles St-Quention-en-Yvelines, novembre.
- Mayrhofer u. (2011). « La gestion des relations siège-filiales un enjeu stratégique pour les firmes multinationales » revue française de gestion, N°212, p65-75.
- MAYRHOFER ULRIKE: « les rapprochements des entreprises :

- perspectives théoriques et managériales
- Minboeva,D. (2005). HRM. Practices and knowledge transfert, personnel review, 35,1, pp 125-144.
- MOULINE A. (1999). « les accords de coopération interentreprises dans les technologies d'informations »nouveaux apports quantitatifs et qualitatifs, revue d'économie industrielle n°89P 85-107.
- Mucchielli J L. (1981). « Alliances stratégiques : une nouvelle théorie pour des nouvelles formes de multinationalisation » revue d'économie industrielle n°118-134.
- Noblet j-p et Simon E. (2010). « capacité d'absorption : revue de littérature, opérationnalisation et exploration » gestion 2000, N°6,p 59-74.
- Nonaka I. et Takeuchi H. (1995). The knowkedge creating campany how Japanese campanis create the dynamics of innovation, New York: oxford university press.
- Penrose. (1959). the theory of the growth of firm, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Rice, R. E., & Rogers, E. M. (1980). Reinvention in the innovation process. Science Communication, 1(4), 499-514.
- Szulanski G. (1996). "Exploring internal stickiness: impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm" strategic management journal, winter special issue, vol, 17. P: 27-44.

- Teece, D.J., (1977). Technology transfer by multinational firms: The resource cost of transferring technological know-how. The economic journal, 87: 242-261
- Todorova G, Dursin B. (2007). Absorptive capacity: valming a reconceptualization, academy of management review, vol.32, N°3, pp 774-786.
- Van Vijk, R., Van den Bosh, R. & Volberda, H., (2003). Knowledge and networks, in Easterby-Smith, M. & M. A. Lyles (Eds.) Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management, London, Blackwell
- W.Simonin B-L.(1999)."Ambiguity and the process of knowledge transfert in strategic alliances", strategic management journal, vol.20,p 595-623;
- Zack, M. H. (1999). Managing codified knowledge. MIT Sloan Management Review, 40(4), 45.
- Zahra S-A et George G. (2002)."absorptive capacity"A review, reconceptualization, and extersion" academy of management Review, vol.27, N°2, p.185-203.