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External knowledge absorption in Chinese SMEs

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Lei Pi

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To My Mother

Preface

This study is inspired by the entrepreneurial stories of many friends and their experiences in managing their enterprises. In the past decades, the world economy has been strongly driven by technological innovation and entrepreneurship. The vital force behind the technology push comes from the almost uncountable number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Riding the waves of technological innovation and entrepreneurship, many ambitious individuals try to launch and establish their own business. Many of my friends and former classmates in college and graduate school have become entrepreneurs. They founded their business in different sectors. Their enterprises are mostly small and lack many relevant resources. By talking to them and listening to their stories, I felt that most of them are aware that they need resources beyond the boundaries of their own enterprises. These friends are the primary source of my inspiration. By viewing *knowledge* as the most critical resource, I decided to investigate how SMEs absorb external knowledge. In my Ph.D. study, I was privileged to investigate the knowledge-absorbing processes in SMEs, the challenges in these processes, and how effective the knowledge assimilation mechanisms are.

The results of the investigation are in the thesis. Without any anticipation of the outcome, it is safe to state that External Knowledge Absorption is a fascinating topic for the Leiden University, for the Netherlands, and China, and indeed for all businessmen in the world.

Table of Contents

Preface	vii
Table of Contents	ix
List of Abbreviations.....	xii
List of Definitions	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
List of Tables.....	xv
1 Innovation and External Knowledge Absorption	1
1.1 Research Backgrounds.....	1
1.1.1 Knowledge and Competitive Advantages	2
1.1.2 Knowledge Management across Organizational Boundaries.....	4
1.1.3 Absorptive Capacity	6
1.1.4 SMEs in China	8
1.1.5 Absorptive Capacity and SMEs	10
1.2 Problem Statement.....	11
1.3 Research Questions.....	13
1.4 Research Methodology	14
1.5 Structure of the Dissertation	15
2 Absorptive Capacity Literature Review	17
2.1 Underpinning the AC Studies	17
2.1.1 Resource-based View	18
2.1.2 Knowledge-based View	19
2.1.3 Organizational Learning.....	21
2.1.4 Dynamic Capabilities	22
2.1.5 Embedding AC in other Theories.....	23
2.2 AC Literature	24
2.2.1 Conceptualization of AC.....	25
2.2.2 Consequences of AC	29
2.2.3 Sources of AC	32
2.2.4 Measurement of AC	36
2.2.5 AC Studies on SMEs.....	39
2.3 Chapter Conclusion.....	41
3 External Knowledge Absorption in SMEs.....	43
3.1 External Knowledge-Absorbing Processes.....	43
3.2 Partitioning Research Question 1	44
3.3 Research Design	45
3.3.1 Research Method.....	46
3.3.2 Data Collection.....	47
3.3.3 Data Analysis	49
3.4 Findings and Discussions	51

3.4.1 External Knowledge Recognition Criteria	51
3.4.2 External Knowledge Assimilation Mechanisms	54
3.4.3 External Knowledge Utilization Purposes.....	59
3.5 Chapter Conclusion.....	63
4 Challenges in Absorbing External Knowledge	67
4.1 Our Search for Challenges of AC	67
4.2 Research Design.....	69
4.3 Challenges in the AC Processes.....	70
4.3.1 Internal Challenges	70
4.3.2 External Challenges.....	75
4.4 Chapter Conclusion.....	77
5 Effects of Different External Knowledge Assimilation Mechanisms.....	79
5.1 AC and Firm Performance	79
5.2 Propositions.....	81
5.2.1 Consulting Personal Networks	81
5.2.2 Purchasing Products or Services	82
5.2.3 Referring to Free Sources	83
5.2.4 Recruiting New Talents	84
5.2.5 Collaborating with Value-chain Partners	85
5.3 Research Methodology	87
5.3.1 Questionnaire Design and Data Collection	87
5.3.2 Measures.....	88
5.3.3 Descriptive Statistics of Measured Variables.....	91
5.3.4 Data Analysis.....	94
5.4 Findings and Discussions.....	97
5.4.1 Effects of External Knowledge Assimilation Mechanisms.....	97
5.4.2 Referring to Free Sources and Recruiting New Talents	99
5.5 Chapter Conclusion.....	102
6 Conclusion and Discussions	105
6.1 Answers to the Research Questions	105
6.1.1 External Knowledge Absorption in SMEs	105
6.1.2 Challenges in Absorbing External Knowledge	107
6.1.3 Effects of Different External Knowledge Assimilation Mechanisms	107
6.2 Answers to the Problem Statement	108
6.3 Contributions.....	110
6.3.1 Theoretical Contributions	110
6.3.2 Managerial Implications	112
6.4 Limitations	113
6.4.1 Methodological Limitations	114
6.4.2 Sample and Data Collection Limitations.....	115
6.5 Avenues for Future Research.....	117

References	119
Appendices	141
Acknowledgment	155
Summary	157
Samenvatting	161
Curriculum Vitae	167
Publications.....	169
SIKS Dissertation Series	171

List of Abbreviations

The list below contains all abbreviations used in the Ph.D. thesis together with a brief explanation. Standard lexical abbreviations, such as “e.g.” and “etc.”, are not listed. Abbreviations used only in tables or figures are explained in the corresponding table or figure.

AC	Absorptive Capacity
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPA	Competing Product Analysis
CTO	Chief Technology Officer
D-W	Durbin-Watson
EKA	External Knowledge Assimilation
EKR	External Knowledge Recognition
EKU	External Knowledge Utilization
EU	European Union
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IoT	Internet of Things
IT	Information Technology
KM	Knowledge Management
M&A	Mergers and Acquisitions
NFBS	Non-financial Business Sector
NIH	Not-Invented-Here
NiTiM	Network of IT and Innovation Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PS	Problem Statement
RQ	Research Question
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

List of Definitions

Definition 1.1: Knowledge	2
Definition 1.2: Knowledge Management	3
Definition 1.3: Dynamic Capabilities.....	4
Definition 1.4: Information Technology Infrastructure	5
Definition 1.5: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	6
Definition 1.6: Absorptive Capacity	6
Definition 1.7: External Knowledge Recognition.....	7
Definition 1.8: External Knowledge Assimilation.....	7
Definition 1.9: External Knowledge Utilization	8
Definition 2.1: Knowledge Spillover	25
Definition 2.2: Organizational Routines	33
Definition 3.1: External Knowledge Recognition Criteria.....	51
Definition 3.2: External Knowledge Assimilation Mechanisms.....	54
Definition 3.3: External Knowledge Utilization Purposes.....	60
Definition 4.1: Challenges in the AC Processes	68
Definition 4.2: Social Capital.....	72
Definition 4.3: Business Reputation.....	73
Definition 4.4: The Not-Invented-Here Syndrome	75

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Theoretical Underpinnings of AC.....	24
Figure 2.2: Relations between In-house R&D, AC, and External Knowledge	26
Figure 3.1 Partitioning Research Question 1	45
Figure 3.2 Interrelated and Iterative Relationship between AC Processes	65
Figure 5.1: Hypothesis between EKA Mechanisms and Performance.....	87
Figure 5.2: Normal Probability Plot (Finance Performance)	95
Figure 5.3: Scatterplot of the Regression Residual (Finance Performance)	95
Figure 5.4: Normal Probability Plot (Growth Performance).....	96
Figure 5.5: Scatterplot of the Regression Residual (Growth Performance).....	96

List of Tables

Table 1.1: SMEs in China's Economy	9
Table 1.2: Trends of Technology-based SMEs in China	9
Table 2.1: Important AC Conceptualizations	30
Table 2.2: Organizational Factors that Influence AC	34
Table 2.3: Environmental Factors of AC	35
Table 2.4: Different Measurement of AC	39
Table 3.1: Interview Structure	47
Table 3.2: Profile of the Interviewees	49
Table 3.3: Summary of the Chapter Findings	64
Table 4.1: AC Challenges in Multinational Corporates	68
Table 4.2: Summary of the Chapter Findings	77
Table 5.1: Questionnaire Screening Process	88
Table 5.2: Description of the Samples	91
Table 5.3: Descriptive Statistics of the Samples	92
Table 5.4: Correlations (Spearman) between Measured Variables	93
Table 5.5: Partial Correlations between Dependent and Independent Variables	93
Table 5.6: Summary of the Two Regressions Models	96
Table 5.7: Results of Regressions Analyses	97
Table 5.8: Summary of the Chapter Findings	102

