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External knowledge absorption in Chinese SMEs

Pi, L.

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Lei Pi

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Promotor:

Prof. dr. H.J. van den Herik	Leiden University
Prof. dr. K. Paetzold	Universität der Bundeswehr München

Copromotor:

Dr. R. J. Ortt	Delft University of Technology
----------------	--------------------------------

Promotiecommissie:

Prof. dr. S. Jong Kon Chin	Leiden University
Prof. dr. E. Bakker	Leiden University
Dr. X. Li	Leiden University
Prof. dr.-ing. G. H. Baltes	University of Applied Sciences Konstanz
Prof. dr. K. Sailer	Munich University of Applied Science
Dr. C.R.M. Weber	Munich University of Applied Science

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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.

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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

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