

Conceptualizing Innovative Knowledge Transfer: A Framework for Study of Multinational Corporations Innovation in Thailand

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Abstract

Innovative knowledge transfer has become an integral part of organizations' business strategies, along with aiding organizations to grow and innovate in the market and gain competitive advantage. This paper aimed to concentrate on the role of innovative knowledge transfer in driving the knowledge quality and innovation capability of an organization. Furthermore, the study considers the complexity associated with the organization of multinational corporations (MNCs). However, prior studies on a comprehensive framework to present a comprehensive framework revealed innovative knowledge factors such as innovative knowledge, new products, new processing, commercialization, and management that can influence the choices of innovative knowledge transfer dimensions such as codification, teachability, complexity, personalization knowledge transfer, and innovative capacity. These studies aimed to explore how innovative knowledge transfer in MNC's in Thailand is boosting competitiveness and contributing to the effectiveness of public research and are increasingly recognized by MNCs innovation with numerous initiatives aimed at promoting collaboration between research institutions and businesses by promoting and facilitating innovative knowledge transfer, and many others are planning to intensify their efforts in this direction.

Design/methodology/approach – This study stated with several literature in the field of innovative knowledge transfer to compose a set of constructs in MNCs in Thailand. In views of the innovative capacity dependent variable has been associated with knowledge transfers, which were subsequently validated focusing in the automobile industrial domain in Thailand and this study responses were subsequently analyzed by conceptual framework.

Keywords: Innovative Knowledge Transfer; Codification; Teachability; Innovative capability; Absorptive capacity.

Introduction

This research is in the area of knowledge management indicates that the ability to create and transfer knowledge internally is one of the main competitive advantages of Innovation multinational corporations (MNCs). Meanwhile, the conceptualizing the MNCs as a differentiated network has inspired a recent stream of research on the creation, assimilation, and diffusion of internal MNC knowledge emphasizing the role of subsidiaries in these processes (Holm & Pedersen, 2000). Subsidiaries differ in their absorptive capacity, and this affects the level of internal knowledge transfer from other MNCs units. The literature, however, offers multiple methods to conceptualize between Innovative Knowledge transfer and Innovative capacity as absorptive capacity and reconfiguration capacity, often not capturing the various facets of absorptive capacity. Moreover, most research has been paid to the question of whether organizations can enhance the creation and development of Innovative capacity as absorptive capacity. In consequence clearly, with a few exemptions, the characteristics of Innovative knowledge transfer as codification knowledge transfer, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer as a key question for leaders of organizations is how to manage the tension between promoting knowledge transfer inside the firm and preventing knowledge imitation from outside the firm. The difficulty is that if something is hard to imitate in the activities of multinational corporation (MNC) subsidiaries as in Thailand. While MNC subsidiaries transfer knowledge viewed in relation to their role in innovation (Lee, 2010; Mudambi, 2008) and part of the MNC's knowledge network (Lee, 2010; Roth et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2009). It may also be hard to transfer within the firm, and if something is easy to transfer within the firm.

In consequence, it raises questions about how organizations create new knowledge and, more importantly, how MNC subsidiaries can be integrated to transfer new innovation knowledge, which is a key form of organizational knowledge creation, it cannot be explained sufficiently in terms of information processing or problem solving. As a result of all MNCs, innovation can be better understood as a process in which the organization creates and defines problems and then actively develops new knowledge to solve them (Nonaka, 1994).

Previous studies have examined knowledge transfers between headquarters and subsidiaries (Ghoshal et al., 1999; Björkman & Barner-Rasmussen, 2004). In addition, there has been in-depth emphasis on the search for knowledge in the network literature and the transfer of knowledge in the product development literature as new product (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998), while little empirical research has been conducted on the complexity of inter-unit knowledge search and transfers between identical units such as marketing units, with some notable exceptions (Bennett & Gabriel, 1999). As recently, while a large number of existing studies provide insight into knowledge transfer between individuals and units with different knowledge stock (Frishmmar & Hoerte, 2005), there seems comparable scarce research on how individuals and units search for and exchange knowledge that have a similar knowledge stock.

Furthermore, there are some arguments on Hansen's (1999) study on work and put it into the context of knowledge transfer between identical units within one organization. Thereby they draw on the target knowledge transfer process among units as a problem of searching for and transferring knowledge among themselves. In addition, MNCs has knowledge transfer between units (as group, department, or division) is affected by the experience of another (Argote & Ingram, 2000), Similarly, Darr and Kurtzberg's (2000) thought knowledge transfer to occur only when a contributor shares knowledge that is used by an adopter (Darr & Kurtzberg, 2000).

Innovative knowledge transfer Dimension

Innovative Knowledge transfer defined as the development of innovations which can be generated either internally or externally and the firm can develop internal capabilities and integrate the different sources of dispersed knowledge (Ardito et al., 2015; Del Giudice & Della Peruta, 2016). The new situation in this century on Innovation MNCs that has adaptation and diversify their business to more increasing with new high technology in their manufacturing of product. We found that the decline in cost of technology and the increased need for production flexibility has caused competition between firms and organizations to intensify (Schulze et al., 2008). In the others research, has shown that the development of innovative products and services has become essential for achieving and retaining competitiveness in global markets (Miron et al., 2004). Moreover, innovation is crucial for firms seeking to find their place in the market and ensuring long-term survival. Consequence, there has been widespread acceptance among scholars and practitioners that "innovation is power" for firms and other organizations. As Knowledge, one of the most important resources of organizations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Conner & Prahalad, 1996; Grant 1996), permits novel

organizational outcomes, including the process of innovation (Smith et al., 2005; Kogut & Zander, 2003). There is also increasing evidence that knowledge is a key building block for the innovation process, and in particular for innovation management (Darroch & McNaughton, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). In this research, we study to the relationship of Innovation MNCs and the Innovative Knowledge Transfer which have the significant combine with the Innovative Capacity of the firm in term of Absorptive Capacity and Reconfiguration Capacity according to the Model: *Absorptive capability and energy efficiency in manufacturing firms – An empirical analysis in Norway by Mette Talseth Solnordal, Sverre Braathen Thyholdt, Energy Policy, Elsevier 2019*

Thus, the survival of a twenty-first century company depends on how quickly and cheaply it can develop new products or Product innovation and Process innovation at an ever-increasing pace and keeping in view of organizational perspective (Chenhall, 2012). Instead of closed innovation, one researcher suggests that the firms in industries where customers' preferences are hard to predict, and products tend to follow a dynamic sustainable innovation. It is dependent on internal adapts by how to manage the development process builds as Ellstrom's (2010) argument support for practice-based innovations can be seen as an alternative to the traditional top-down model of understanding and managing change in organizations. These issues can be stated that Innovation and adaption provide the identity of an organization (Sagarin & Anival, 2010); and they are dynamic process that evolve over time.

This research we address the significance of both employees' and users' contribution to innovation by building the process on the concept of practice-base innovation (Hasu et al., 2011) and the integrated of product innovation and process innovation to be the focus way to achieve the concept of sustainable innovation which cleared through most MNCs in Thailand in modern information technology such as Automobile industry, Electronic & Appliance industry etc. also have complex network structure with meet the innovation demand quickly in the market (Xu et al., 2015).

Research Objectives

This study has two contributions. *First*, by focusing on innovative knowledge transfer dimension, we shift the attention from the previous study MNCs innovation such as innovative knowledge, new product, new processing, commercialization and management through innovative knowledge transfer dimension (as codification, techability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer) in MNCs organization as subsidiaries differ in their innovative knowledge transfer. *Second*,

prior research considered innovative capacity (as absorptive capacity and reconfiguration capacity) from an aggregate perspective. This study presents a refined conceptualization regarding to associated with their innovative capacity which can affects the overall level of MNCs innovative units especially in automobile industry in Thailand which required employee-driven innovation at work from their new technology knowledgeable. These relationships are presented and discuss our results that we have provided some implications and directions for further research.

Relate Literature and Research Proposition

Innovative Knowledge transfer Dimension

The previous idea of transferring knowledge focusing on explicit and tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) has study for MNC strategy and structure research. Tacit knowledge is not easily visible and expressible, deeply embedded in personal belief, attitudes, values, and experiences that give it its meaning and is not easily formalized and communicated to others. In contrast, explicit knowledge can be codified and documented, making it easily and cheaply available to large number of people at little or no marginal cost. These differences significantly influence in organizational knowledge is highly tacit and explicit knowledge can be shared for an organization to successfully management (Hislop, 2002). Moreover, it is depending on the external context, the importance of transferring tacit or explicit knowledge shifts: tacit knowledge becomes more important to decision-making and strategic positioning is high turbulent environments (Jones & Mahon, 2012). More than half of the articles reviewed do not define Innovative knowledge transfer. As knowledge transfer can be defined as a process of dynamic exchange of knowledge between the sender and the receiver (Szulanski, 2000). As the meaning of the definition of knowledge transfer, we can imply that knowledge transfers understanding as a process.

Tacit Knowledge Transfer in Multinational Corporation (MNCs) Innovation

We referred to the previous study knowledge transfer in organizational with the strategies implemented by knowledge in organization as knowledge imitation, knowledge transfer and knowledge protection are coexisting strategies. In particularly of knowledge transfer research, movement of networks (Argote & Ingram, 2000), codification (Watson & Hewett, 2006) and personalization (Borgatti & Cross, 2003). Similarly, in a recent review, Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) examined the effectiveness of knowledge transfer mechanisms (Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003), such as movement of personnel (Nam et al., 2006), alliances (Gulati, 1999), technology (Kane &

Alavi, 2007), templates (Jensen & Szulanski, 2007), social networks (Argote et al., 2003) and routines (Darr & Kurtzberg, 2002). Argote and Ingram (2000) propose that a solution to the tension between transferring and protecting knowledge is to embed knowledge in the networks involving members (e.g., social networks of individuals, division of tasks among individuals, tool expertise across individuals and links among individuals, tasks and tools). In consequence, it raises questions about how Innovation MNCs have immediately in Innovative Knowledge transfer and be compromising with Innovative capability as absorptive capacity and reconfiguration capacity. More importantly, how they transfer new knowledge, Innovation, which is a key form of organizational knowledge creation, it cannot be explained sufficiently in terms of information processing or problem solving. In many industries, MNCs face dual pressures for product standardization, high quality and be better understood as a process in which the organization creates and defines problems and the actively develops new knowledge to solve them (Nonaka, 1994).

Furthermore, in the several background research we have found no empirical evidence on the innovation MNCs and innovative knowledge transfer in associated with innovative capacity as absorptive capacity and reconfiguration capacity, In particular subsidiaries or MNCs are located as sub-divisions of production units, and play a significant role in implementing in manufacturing which relied on marketing strategy and innovation strategy on production development at the local area. Thus, MNCs has knowledge transfer between units (as group, department, or division) is affected by the experience of another (Argote & Ingram, 2000). Similarly, Darr and Kurtzberg's (2000) thought knowledge transfer to occur only when a contributor shares knowledge that is used by an adopter (Darr & Kurtzberg, 2000). This study, therefore, perceives innovative capacity as absorptive capacity has examines their influence on improved knowledge by innovative knowledge transfer as a component of intra-firm technology transfer performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Proposition 1: MNCs innovation is high positive influence to Innovative knowledge transfer.

Proposition 1a: Innovative knowledge is positively influence Innovative knowledge transfer (codification, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer).

Proposition 1b: new product is positive influence to Innovative knowledge transfer (codification, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer).

Proposition 1c: new process is positive influence to Innovative knowledge transfer (codification, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer).

Proposition 1d: commercialization is positive influence to Innovative knowledge transfer (codification, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer).

Proposition 1e: management is positive influence to Innovative knowledge transfer (codification, teachability, complexity and personalization knowledge transfer).

Innovative capacity

Absorptive capacity of host-country citizens and improved knowledge

The rapidly changing business environment characterizing many firms today indicates that absorption capacity should be an important focus for all firms especially MNC subsidiary. Because this study focuses on host-country characteristics, for the purpose of this study, absorptive capacity refers to education and technical training, labor skills and learning capability traits of the host-country citizens employed in the subsidiaries of foreign MNCs in Thailand. We refer to Waroonkun and Stewart (2008), host countries will achieve some advancement in their economies once they can absorb the transferred technology. In 2005 Teasley and Robinson argued in the present context, market environment, cultural factor, government policy and absorptive capacity of the host country for MNCs that impact organizational strategic decisions such as transfer and adoption of improved knowledge.

Prior knowledge base refers to existing individual units of knowledge available within the organization (Minbaeva et al., 2003). Thus, employees' ability, as reflected by their educational background, and acquired job-related skills may represent the "prior related knowledge", which the firm needs to incorporate and apply (Minbaeva et al., 2003). However, according to the existing literature, ability alone is not adequate to predict absorptive capacity. Thus, Employees require motivation to assimilate and apply new knowledge acquired externally. Research reveals that even though Innovative Knowledge transfer might have individuals with a high capability to learn. "Its ability to utilize the absorbed knowledge will be low if employee's motivation is low or absent" (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1997). On the prior literature repeatedly stresses that technology recipients require attaining a minimum human resource capacity for them to take advantage from technology transfer (Girma, 2005), thereby establishing absorptive capacity as a strong facilitator of technology transfer performance. This study, therefore, perceives innovative capacity as absorptive capacity has examines their influence on improved knowledge by innovative knowledge transfer as a component of intra-firm technology transfer performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Proposition 2: MNCs innovation is high positive influence to innovative capacity (Absorptive capacity, Reconfiguration capacity)

Proposition 3: Innovative capacity dimension of host-country citizens and its dimensions have a significant and positive effect on improved Innovative knowledge transfer among subsidiaries of foreign MNCs innovation.

Proposition 3a: Absorptive capacity of host-country citizens and its dimensions have a significant and positive effect on improved Innovative knowledge transfer among subsidiaries of foreign MNCs innovation.

Proposition 3b: Reconfiguration capacity of host-country citizens and its dimensions have a significant and positive effect on improved Innovative knowledge transfer among subsidiaries of foreign MNCs innovation.

Proposition 4: Innovative knowledge transfer mediates is a significant and positive relationship between MNCs Innovation and innovative capacity

Research Methodology

Conceptual Framework

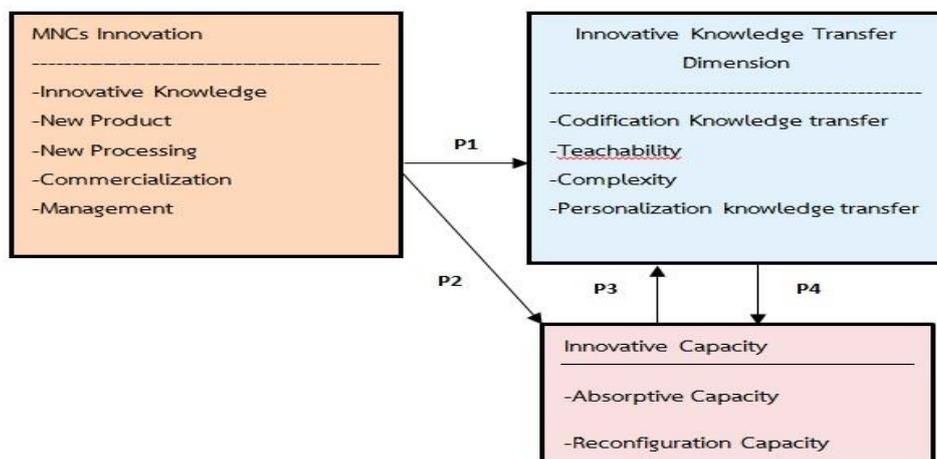


Figure 1: Conceptualizing Innovative knowledge transfer: A framework for study of MNCs innovation

Methodology

In the initial phase, this study employed quantitative research method with self-administered questionnaires to collect primary data from respondents. The target population is Thai workers in MNCs in Thailand especially automobile industry, both male and female, who are currently pursuing

under working in the production line as well as those who have concerning the manufacturing industry in all levels by questionnaire for data collection. Therefore, we perform analyze and designing questionnaire would be needed for the conceptual framework.

In this research, we expected that a positive association existing independent variable and mediator variables such Innovation MNCs as innovative knowledge, new product & new process innovation, commercialization and management are associated with innovative knowledge transfer and innovative capacity in the firm. Therefore, we may assume that MNCs innovation can impact innovative knowledge transfer through process innovation & product innovation and contributed in innovative capacity among employees in such organization. However, few studies have analyzed the innovation MNCs especially innovative knowledge in how to create the significant effect on innovative knowledge transfer as codification, teachability, complexity and personalization techniques for innovative capacity creation in organization and hence, all are determinant factor in the achievement of organizational goals. This relationship was summarized in the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1. was provided the catalyst that enables process innovation & product innovation as well as for the achievement of innovative capability in the organization, the environment settings. This paper selects automobile firm MNCs from Industrial Estate in Thailand as sample and the population was obtained by questionnaire. We have a survey research method examined the relationship between MNCs innovation, Innovative knowledge transfer, innovation capability. A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to survey at MNCs in Thailand's Industrial Estate (Amata Nakorn Industrial Estate, Choburi province).

Discussion and Conclusions

We refer to the demand for effective and qualify expatriates to operate in the overseas marketplace has increased significantly with the boom in internationalization (Bolino, 2001). Unfortunately, MNC's have been severely plagued by the persistent and recurring problems with a significantly high rate of the premature return of expatriates (Tung, 1987) that creates explicit as well as opportunity costs. The focus of most MNC is on the technical competencies to operate successfully on international assignments, however, the concept of cross-cultural knowledge has received scant attention. A consensus among existing studies seems to emphasize the role of innovation as the key to sustainable development and sustainable performance (Weber et al., 2016; Senge et al., 2010). Technology transfer as a difficult and complex process remains one of the most

impressive and important features of MNCs that preserves innovative knowledge developed across the regions, thereby large organization firms throughout the world to avail benefits by simply exposing themselves to the developed innovative technology (Kogut & Zander, 2003). The significance of technology transfer for the host economies (Jordaan, 2013) especially the development country in Southeast Asia or the other regions. In Addition, research reveals that the integration of global knowledge enables MNCs to reap the incremental value of being innovation multinational (Kogut & Zander, 2003). It is argued that an MNC exploits its superior knowledge in a host country by transferring hereditary knowledge to its foreign affiliated (Driffield et al., 2010), which could be translated as improved knowledge, enhanced working practices and improved technology adoption among its subsidiaries in the host economy, which, in turn, is expected to benefit the corporate sustainability performance of the unit receiving the technology. In such context, one major concern for foreign MNCs, while transferring their capital and technology across borders as Innovation MNCs.

The conclusions of this research have important significance for the Innovative knowledge transfer in Innovation MNCs through process innovation & product innovation for MNCs in Thailand. The conclusion of most previous studies tends to encourage to keep process innovation, product innovation, and innovative capacity (as employee-driven innovation at work) in MNCs with high degree of concentration. The above research conclusion is of great significance for the choice of innovation strategy for innovative knowledge transfers development of MNCs.

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