
Editorial: As we launch a new journal on business strategic alliances

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As a new journal, *International Journal of Strategic Business Alliances (IJSBA)* considers inter-firm partnerships as an effective strategic alternative for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage for firms as stated in its mission statement. It focuses on inter-firm collaboration in a variety of forms in various industries in both national and international environments. It aims at promoting our understanding, patterns and strategies of such collaborative ventures in this competitive global marketplace. *IJSBA* provides a platform for generation, critiques and discussions of knowledge on the formations and implementations of strategic alliances between/among firms.

IJSBA aims to foster the creation and dissemination of knowledge on strategic business alliances from various perspectives including economic, organisational and strategic management. It strives to establish an effective channel of communication between researchers, managers, consultants, policy makers and other concerned individuals and institutions with the complex role of strategic alliances in business competition. It also intends to promote and exchange theoretical developments, research findings and practices in the field of interfirm partnerships. The international dimension is emphasised to comprehend worldwide practices, grasp cross cultural differences between nations and to learn from increasing use of such collaborative ventures across nations.

IJSBA provides a vehicle to help students of strategic alliances including academics, managers, consultants and policy makers to disseminate information and to learn from each others' work. To accomplish the journal's mission, I am glad to report that we have gathered a distinguished Editorial Board consisting of experts on strategic alliances from eight countries.

IJSBA publishes original conceptual and research papers, review papers, case studies, management reports, book reviews, research notes and commentaries. It will occasionally come out with special issues devoted to important topics concerning strategic business alliances. In this inaugural issue, the journal has four research articles, one case study and one book review. Below is a brief description of each one of them.

The first article, 'A fresh look at strategic alliances: research issues and future directions', attempts to clarify the current confusion in terminology and typology of strategic alliances by discussing several misconceptions. It also adopts 'strategic alliances' as a generic term and offering a typology of alliances. In addition, it reviews the theoretical foundations of strategic alliances. Moreover, it provides a general review of research endeavours and identifies several avenues for future research. This article tries to reach a consensus on the terminology and typology of alliances or it would at

least make researchers aware of their differences and stimulate further discussion on the subject.

In the second article, 'Interpartner harmony in strategic alliances: managing commitment and forbearance', Das and Kumar provide a unique view to strategic alliances. They consider the emergence of harmony in alliances as a natural outcome, overcoming commitment and forbearance the continuing onslaughts of conflict and opportunism. After offering four kinds of inter-partner harmony in alliances, they discuss each in three principal types of alliances, namely, joint ventures, minority equity alliances and non-equity alliances. Strategic alliances have often been studied in a context of conflicts between partners, but the treatment of harmony in alliances by Das and Kumar provides new lenses to examine alliances.

The third article, 'Community of firms: a new collaborative paradigm for open innovation and an analysis of Blade.org', by Snow, Strauss and Culpán introduces a conceptual framework of a collaborative community of firms and analyses Blade.org as an example. The authors assert that this new community-based organisation design enables numerous firms with a common interest, but different resources and capabilities, to collaborate with one another to achieve open innovation. This article is one of pioneering studies on a new breed of strategic alliances, called a community of firms aiming to lay a ground for further research on the subject.

In the fourth article, 'Evolution of cooperation and dynamics of expectations: implications for strategic alliances', Royer and Simons investigate the interaction between reputation and partner expectations in business alliances. The authors examine the impact of reputation on the creation of alliances as well as the influence of expectations of partner behaviour on the failure and longevity of alliances. Furthermore, to support their arguments they summarised their finding of an experimental study. Their research results suggest that alliance duration was significantly associated with expectation matching behaviour on the part of both partners whereas expectation mismatching was associated with the cessation of alliance behaviours, particularly where the partner was perceived to behave with a selfish orientation. Interestingly, it was found that expectation matching behaviours were more likely between partners with similar reputation than being associated with high reputation partners. This article provides important insights into the relationships between partner reputations and expectations.

The case study entitled, 'A struggling international partnership: TNK-BP joint venture', by Ekin and King introduces serious hardships involved in an international joint venture between TNK, a Russian partner and BP, British Petroleum, a multinational oil company. In a few short years, the venture started manifesting instability primarily caused by the differences in economic motives and cultural orientations of the partners. This case study illustrates the souring relationships between the partners as evidenced in recent times and assesses the instability of the venture. I believe this study is an excellent illustration of how the relationships between joint venture partners – a western MNC and a host country firm can develop into hostile affairs. It is a good qualitative analysis and a teaching tool for class instructions.

Finally, the book review by Chinta on *Managing Network Resources*, by Ranjay Gulati (2007) pinpoints that the book expands the resource-based view of the firm by adding external sources that is called 'network resources'. Basically network resources are defined as resources that accrue to a firm from its ties with external constituents including – but not limited to – partners, suppliers and customers and thus exist outside a firm's boundaries. In his overall critique of the book, Chinta concludes that the book

presents the current gaps in the literature of interfirm partnerships and identifies new areas for future research. The book also offers several pragmatic guidelines for practitioners who wish to document the positive aspects of inter-firm relationships in their firm-level strategic business development initiatives.

In serving the journal's mission, I see a need for synergy and collaboration between researchers and practitioners to formulate and implement innovative solutions for strategic alliances. Hence, the objectives of alliance researchers should be not only to create new knowledge, but also to build new links, networks and collaborations between them to enhance original conceptual and practical solutions for organisations in forming and managing strategic alliances. I hope *IJSBA* would be instrumental in improving research efforts toward this direction.

Finally, I would like to thank the Editorial Board members for volunteering their services by reviewing paper submissions, providing valuable feedback to authors and contributing their own research papers to the journal. In addition, I deeply appreciate those other anonymous reviewers who have provided excellent insights and recommendations to the authors. Of course, I thank the contributors to this inaugural issue and future issues of the journal, without their contribution this journal would not be possible. Moreover, I would like to express my appreciation of Inderscience Publishers for its support in making this journal a reality. I hope this initial excitement will ignite more momentum in the development of *IJSBA* as one of the premier research outlets.