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Smashing local boundaries for sustain companies' innovativeness: The role of international R&D teams

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A B S T R A C T

Recognizing internationalization as one of the more recently debated topics in the management field, this paper aims at investigating the influence of international R&D teams on companies' innovativeness. More specifically, combining the transaction cost approach, the international product life cycle model, and the eclectic paradigm, an integrative research model with four associated hypotheses is proposed to study international R&D teams. Hypotheses are tested using data collected on a sample of 218 Italian companies with the aim of enriching the ongoing debate about the role of international R&D teams in sustaining companies' innovativeness. The research shows that the number of international team projects, the number of R&D employees from foreign countries, and the number of meetings during the year for international knowledge sharing positively influence companies' innovative outcomes. Accordingly, results emphasize the central role of knowledge contamination and collaboration for promoting companies' innovation.

1. Introduction

Several researchers and practitioners have long identified that national boundaries represent a limitation for companies' innovation and performance (Lewin, Massini, & Peeters, 2009; Zhu, Dong, Xu, & Kraemer, 2006; Vines, Jones, & McCarthy, 2015; Caputo, Cillo, Candelo, & Liu, 2019). The lack of acknowledging risks related to globalization and foreign competitiveness has reduced companies' capabilities to catch worldwide opportunities with several negative consequences for their survival and economic performance (Park & Jun 2003; Sabine Sander and Janovsky, 2016).

In an attempt to recognize the need for supporting both companies and practitioners in overcoming local and national perspectives, studies on relevant challenges for managerial and organizational have emerged with respect to possible approaches for enhancing opportunities within today's 'worldwide market', which analyzed how to reduce potential negative impacts on companies' stability and survival as a way for building more competitive business models (Grosse, 2004; Stiglitz, 2007; Bremmer, 2014)

Several theoretical and practical contributions have been acknowledged with regard to ways in which companies can incentive internationalization processes (Andersson, 2000, Fletcher, 2001), by acting on local culture (Fan & Tan, 2015), legislative boundaries (Santangelo & Meyer, 2017), and market asymmetries (Taylor, 2013). Despite the multiple and relevant advancements made so far by existing research, one criticism is that extant investigation focus the attention on foreign countries only as possible markets for increasing companies' power through a more extensive 'products allocation' (Luo & Tung, 2007).

As underlined by Tsui (2007), foreign markets cannot be only considered territories that must be 'invaded' for extending companies' power, but they should be also approached as potential sources of value to increase companies' competitiveness thanks to the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and capabilities useful for defining more efficient managerial models.

Reflecting about a possible extension of the perspective in which foreign markets can be approached, this research focuses on the

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