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Leadership Styles in Strategic Alliances: A lodging industry perspective

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Abstract

Strategic alliances are an important phenomenon in management literature that has been increasingly recognized. Within the framework of alliance theories, this study focuses on examining strategic alliance types in the lodging industry. By also reviewing the existing research literature, leadership styles that contribute success or failure of management in strategic alliances are examined. A framework is developed forthe growing use of strategic alliances in the lodging industry and applied leadership styles in the alliances. This study indicates lodging alliances have different types of strategic alliances based on equity alliances and non-equity alliances. It also includes theoretical paradigms that explain that these relationships can include transaction cost economics, resource dependency, strategic choice, stakeholder theory, organizational learning and intuitional theory.
The basic objective of this study is to put forward strategic alliances with a lodging industry perspective and particularly examine leadership styles that influence strategic alliances.

Keywords: Strategic alliances; Hospitality alliances; Leadership styles

1. Introduction

Inter-organizational relationship formation is a way to establish competitive advantage in rapid change environments. Atkinson and Butcher (2003) argue that due to today's highly complex and diverse environments of organizations, economic efficiency and hierarchy are not being accepted as contemporary management

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principles.Instead, co-operative relationships in the perspective of politically driven structures, flexible networks, strategic alliances and entrepreneurial adaptability are being followed (Atkinson and Butcher, 2003). When this issue has attained a new importance in the present situation by understanding value-adding strategies for building alliances, managers are able to contribute more to both their firms' success and their industries as well (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

Lodging industry managers and researchers have also realized that alliance theory is important to facilitate entering new markets, sharing mutual resources, and sustaining firm and industry growth and competitiveness. Leadership styles are discussed in this study, unlike other studies,as a facilitating element for alliances. As Hefner noted, "Strategic alliances require a unique style of leadership. Leaders set the benchmarks for organizational performance. Leaders creating strategic alliances must have a vision of the benefits to be gained in cooperative ventures and help their organizations overcome inhibitions about risk taking and resource sharing." (Hefner, 1994) Furthermore, Bollinger and Smith (2001) pointed out that leadership should focus on establishing a culture that respects knowledge, reinforces its sharing, retains its people, and builds loyalty to the organization (Bolinger and Smith, 2001). Therefore, leadership style (transformational leadership) is a significant predictor for alliance management success.

2. Literature Review and Propositions

2.1. Strategic alliances

Enterprises have been attempting to determine whether it would be more advantageous to purchase or produce a product or service. Many studies covered by the literature in foreign countries recently shows how alliances could become an important alternative to purchase, disposal or domestic development as an answer to this question (Gulati and Lawrence, 2000). In the beginning of 20th century, Drucker (1995) emphasized that the greatest change thatensures growth in relationships as part of the management methods of enterprises derives from partnership, rather than ownership (Drucker, 1995).

Accordingly, the concept of creating relationships and strategic alliances has become important to enterprises, and strategic allianceshavebegun to be witnessed in almost all sections of business life. Today, enterprises have realized that they could supply perspectives, know-how and skills by entering an alliance with other institutions(Baloh and Awazu, 2008).

The business management literature consists of a great variety of definitions, and thus, different views with regard to the concept of strategic alliance.Gulati defines strategic alliances as "voluntary agreements between firms involving exchange, sharing or co-development of products, technologies or services so that each benefits from resources of the other, and gains competitive power and performance" (Gulati, 1998). A strategic alliance can be defined as a cooperative agreement involving two or more firms, through which linkages are built to share resources, leading to the joint accomplishment of individual goals (Parkhe, 1991).

The definition of strategic alliance usually appears as cooperation agreements among two or more independent firms, allowing them to put the resources, knowledge and skills into mutual use of the other and provide the enterprises with competitive advantage (Semercioz and Cakinberk, 2003b).

Accordingly, the building blockof an alliance is the firms' sharing of tangible and intangible resources among themselves, which provides the firms within the network with superior competitive position. Furthermore, it isrecommended that the firms use their cooperation as a source of competitive advantage of strategic measurements in order to improve their profitability as the development of cooperation thatdirects the development of contractual agreements among partner firms. In order to make such development cooperation more effective and profitable, they were based on size, management mechanisms and agreements of resource sharing (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003). It supports the theoretical basis of concepts such as the resource-based view (RBV), transaction cost economies (TCE), strategic preference, shareholder theory, learning theory and theoretical theory (Barringer and Harrison, 2000)

The transaction cost economies emphasize transaction costs, and thus explain the market operations view. As part of the concept of strategic alliances, methods could be used for transactions, resulting in a decrease in total cost by following and managing the transactions among markets (Child and Faulkner, 1998).

Contrary to the transaction cost approach thatemphasizes a decrease in costs, the resource-based view argues that a firm could maximize its value by benefiting from and accumulating valuable resources. In other words, enterprises might seem to be heading towards finding the most appropriate resource among all other resources (Balakrishnan and Koza, 1993). For Wernerfelt (1984), who is among the pioneers of the resource-based approach, this theory is based on the view that a firm's success is largely determined by the resources it owns and controls (Wernerfelt, 1984).

According to the strategic preference approach, a firm's strategic orientation is influenced by the characteristics of the market in which the firm is located (Luo and Tan, 1998). As a result, an enterprise develops a set of strategic preferences in order to ensure market integration. The strategy typology developed by Miles and Snow (1978) is the most well-known one among these preferences. According to the strategy typology developed by Miles and Snow, there are four types of strategies. These are known as the prospector strategy, defender strategy, analyzer strategy and reactor strategy. The enterprises are entitled to make different strategic preferences, depending on their resources (Miles, *et.al.*,1978).

As a result of a developing network economy and a rich circle of knowledge, traditional hierarchies have been replaced by various alliances with unknown boundaries, which could be temporary or which are also connected with inter-connected organizations, customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders and competitors(Solomon, 2001). The shareholders of an enterprise can be defined as all the parties thatare influenced by its achievements or whose operational achievements create an influence. They can be listed as financiers, suppliers, employees, customers, competitors, the societies in which they operate and regulatory bodies. An analysis on enterprises' relations with its shareholders forms a part of shareholder theory (Freeman and McVea, 2001). The various mergers thatare carried out by enterprises, particularly with its suppliers, which are considered among its external shareholders, distribution channels and other rival enterprises, are likely to constitute strategic alliances.The shareholders are likely to establish a form of alliance with, cooperate with or interact with other shareholders(Frooman, 1999).

Some authors define strategic alliances as a learning race, in which partners try to seize opportunities of learning from each other (Hamel, 1991). The enterprise thatis capable of obtaining knowledge quicker than its cooperation partner is more likely to win the partnership competition and gain the highest benefits. In multi-partnered alliances and alliance networks, the outcome of learning is influenced not only by the pace of obtaining knowledge, but also from the opportunities and skills available for each firm thataccesses sources of information. For example, if the decentralized position of a unit within a strategic alliance network restricted its opportunity of obtaining new knowledge, its learning transactions would also be restricted, no matter how quick they are (Walter,*et al.*, 2007).The learning theory also explains why enterprises choose certain partners to cooperate with, just like the resource-based view (Hitt, et al., 2000).

The studies concerning institutional theory suggest a capacity thatmeets a certain degree of legitimacy requiring diversity of technical benefits thatare inherent in strategic alliances. In other words, it refers to an important legitimacy in which the performance of the firm and alliance could be boosted and technical benefits could be realized. As a result, enterprises are likely to take action to ensure and gain legitimacy, and thus gain strategic and technical benefits, such as resources and support from its components. These views have been based on the studies thatexplain the enterprises' efforts for gaining economic and competitive advantage, and thus establishing inter-organizational linkages to legitimate actors and enterprises. Improving the firm's reputation influences the performance of firms supporting inter-organizational relationships, and suggests the legitimacy of relationships between the firms influencing the alliance performance. The alliance activity (its action, transaction, efficiency) consists of the diversity of tangible and intangible resources (individual skills, information and persons.), as well as sharing and obtaining the risks (Dacin, et al., 2007).

This chapter presents evidence about the facts related with lodging industry collaborations that were developed on the basis of these theoretical theories.

2.2. Strategic alliances in the hospitality industry

The definition of strategic alliances differs from one author to the other, and different views exist with regard to the categorization of strategic alliances as well. For example, Coopers and Lybrand (1997) mention seven types of alliances, namely, joint marketing and promotion, joint selling and distribution, joint production, design collaboration, technology licensing, research and development contracts and other outsourcing purposes (Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001). On the other hand, certain researchers classify inter-organizational mergers in two categories (Contractor and Kundu, 1998). These are called equity alliances and non-equity alliances. In literature, equity alliances are mentioned in terms of two different types, namely, joint ventures and strategic alliances based on minority stocks. The non-equity alliances derive from mutual agreements thatare made by an enterprise in functional areas such as supplying, producing or distributing goods and services without sharing the stocks (Hitt, et al., 1989). Such alliances consist of regional franchise and agency agreements, know-how agreements, license agreements, subcontracting agreements, turn-key contracts, joint research and development agreements, joint product development, long-term sourcing agreements, joint manufacturing, joint marketing, mutual distribution agreements, franchising agreements, outsourcing and other mutual agreements (Gebrekidan, and Awuah, 2002; Park and Cho, 1997; Langfield-Smith and Smith, 2003).

Chathoth and Olsen have made a different categorization in terms of lodging enterprises, and thus classified the strategic alliances as management contracts and franchising agreements, alliances among suppliers, alliances between a tourism establishment and supplier, marketing alliances, technology and transfer of know-how alliances, as well as strategic alliances among rival companies (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

In the lodging industry, the use of collaboration primarily revolved around franchising agreements in the past. There are a great many franchising agreements through which chains of lodging and catering services are used both globally and locally. The related examples include Holiday Inn, Best Western, Quality Inn, Sofitel, Hyatt, Cendant, McDonalds and Burger King. For example, Cendant is not only a hotel management, but also the owner of brands such as Days Inn, Howard Johnson, HoJo Inn, Ramada and Super 8. The Holiday Inn, which is owned by Six Continents, uses a complicated strategy ranging from ownership, leasing and management contracts to agencies. Furthermore, lodging franchising agreements are similar to a strategic alliance in terms of equity alliances and non-equity alliances. However, they are dissimilar in terms of the development of relationships among the firms through resource allocation and fulfillment of merger partners' objectives (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

On the other hand, the definition of franchising is made as follows: "Franchising is an elaborate form of licensing, whereby, a firm (franchisor) grants an independent entrepreneur (franchisee) the right to use both intangible assets (e.g., brand name or service) along with tangible assets (e.g., products, methods of operations) in a specified geographic area" (Preble et al., 2000). In fact, it has also been granted the brand name of franchisee, as well as its intangible resources such as image and service quality and tangible resources such as marketing skills(Preble, et al., 2000). In strategic alliances among suppliers, an enterprise that sells various systems and services goes into partnership with another supplier in order to produce these systems and services at cheaper prices. For example, a strategic alliance has been carried out between the Geac Restaurant System, which lacks sufficient resources and skills, and Sharp Electronic. As part of this partnership, Geac Restaurant System aims to produce and sell better goods and services with regard to point sale systems, whereas Sharp Electronic seeks to enter new markets (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003). Supplier-provider cooperation is illustrated in the example of the collaboration between Marriott, and the furniture designer and manufacturer, Steelcase, Inc. Within the scope of this alliance, the rooms of Marriott Hotels have been redesigned, and thus the furniture company has promoted itself and sold its products to all the enterprises involved in the chain. This situation enabled Mariott Hotels to boost its customer satisfaction and gain a competitive advantage (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

Strategic alliances come in many forms, another of which is a marketing alliance. Buhalis and Main examine two major trends in the hospitality market as "mass customization" and "disintermediation". Removing the emerging accommodation enterprises towards disintermediation enables the establishment of one-to-one marketing of products as a major supplier.However, this will only be possible if technology is used effectively (Buhalis and Main, 1998).

In Bucklin and Sengupta's (1993) study, they developed a model for successful co-marketing alliances. This model has such variables as the existence of balance of power in the relationship, the size of the conflict, how the business is compatible with other relations in the previous period, and other variables such as period of inter-organizational relationships and environmental changes (Medina-MunÄoz, and GarcõÂa-FalcoÂn, 2000). There are some examples in the lodging industry that comprise the development of marketing and technology alliances. The alliance between Leading Hotels of theWorld and Relais& Chateaux can be given as an example of this development in the lodging industry. Some of these alliances range from data sharing and creating an internet portal, to joint marketing (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

Today's businesses acquire the benefits of rapidly developing information technology's aspects of best business practices. IT providessome changes to organizations' strategic positions, such as response time, operational cost, and differentiation. ITs usually increase the number of processes within the organizationby providing the integration between functions of the organization. Information systems in hotel enterprises includeintegrated point-of-sale systems, management and strategic information systems, accounting and payroll systems, and food production systems. Technologies also increase efficiency and productivity (Buhalis, 1998). Organizations can form strategic alliances, develop innovative distribution channels and satisfy consumer demand with communication with the use of IT (Main, 2002).

As Cline emphasized, there are many marketing and technology alliances. For example, "…pursuing Internet, broadband and wireless convergence opportunities for the group to capitalize on its core competencies in franchising, outsourcing, cross-selling and preferred alliance programs. Cendant's WizCom International subsidiary recently signed an agreement with GetThere.com to build an interface between the two organizations to allow GetThere.com's corporate travel customers to access WizCom's customer base, that consists of more than 90 hotel chains worldwide'' (Cline, 2000).

Finally, relationships between alliances can be spread to international dimensions, as can be seen in Le Meridian and Nikko Hotels. This alliance, despite a marketing alliance, to improve their competitive position was a strategic move for both companies. These two hotels in the luxury hotel category aimed to create a "one-stop" reservation system by combining their complementary resources. In addition, another purpose of combining complementary resources is to promote customer satisfaction. This strategy achieves brand awareness, trial and repurchase for both hotel companies (Chathoth and Olsen, 2003).

The alliance types have been revealed with the examples given on the development of hospitality firms. Increased confidence and effective leadership styles between partners reduce opportunistic behaviors toward one another, and develop technology between organizations. The explanations supporting the development of these alliances will be presented in other sections.

2.3. Leadership styles in strategic alliances

There are early studies about leadership behaviors (Politis, 2001; Ribiere& Sitar, 2003) in service firms that have formed strategic alliances (Chen and Barnes, 2006) in the literature.

Leadership is important, particularly in terms of providing information sharing, developing trust, ensuring adaptation to culture and creating commitment to the organization (Bolinger and Smith, 2001)The leadership styles are considered as an important factor in the achievements of strategic alliances..Whiple and Frankle also indicate in their study that leadership is a factor thatcreates an impact on the success or failure of an alliance (Whipple and Frankel, 2000). Furthermore, Speakman and Bruner indicate the application of an improper leadership style as one of the six factors that resultin the failure of the Volvo-Renault alliance. (Speakman and Bruner, 1998). Various researchers who study alliances claim that leadership is a success factor for alliances.On the other hand, researchers who study leadership do not need to address this issue as a research subject. There are insufficient methods and instruments in this research field (Osborn and Marion, 2009). If there is no external support and backup, leadership must be more important for the results of the alliance.

Leaders must initiate the commitment to be created in the alliance by encouraging information sharing, trust, reciprocity and cooperation for success (Liu, et al., 2003). The alliance leaders should have the ability to inspire to be able to fulfill these tasks to create true partnership and launch in joint operations. A common vision of thefollowers and enablingthem to accept central values requires a kind of transformational and visionary leadership, and demonstration of a comparatively strong impact (Liu et al., 2003). Management will support organizational learning in these cases for the development of their employees' vision, as defined partly in theories of transformational leadership (Hallin and Mamburg, 2008).Effective transformational leaders direct the employees to provide self-realization, are dominant in instilling confidence, and in determining high expectations and goals. As stated previously by Bass (1999), collaboration with the vision of the leader is based on individuation, reconciliation, and inspiration of transformational leaders. Because of the capabilities of the transformational leadership type, transformational leaders convince alliance partners that it is not simply having a stake in the partnership, but also emphasizing the value of a common purpose and mission. Transformational leaders have the capacity to controlconflict between groups and createimpact. Theycurtaildisputes between different interests of parties in alliance. They also infuse the values of employees to the organization to achieve common goals and utilize the talents of each other rather than focusing on their own interests. Transformational leadership is one of the success factors of an alliance thatprovides motivation about how to transfer and share knowledge, and also how to meet the expectations of employee's vision, trust and partnership (Liu, et al., 2003).Various studies indicate that, one of the factors affecting the knowledge sharing in between cross-border cooperation is regarded as effective leadership, which is defined as one of the key variables encouraging these initiatives. (Eglene, et al., 2007).

In due course, the researchers began to appreciate the significance of organizational perspectives, and they focused on the determination of the organizational factors that influence cross-border sharing of knowledge, such as organizational structure, organizational values and culture, processes and procedures, benefit and cost, trust, leadership and talents (Willem &Buelens, 2007).

In Hall (2004)'s study, was mentioned thatthe influence of the social network of board connections of strategic alliance formation, described how in the presence of trust, managers will be lessconcerned about the incentive of a partner to cheat in a cooperative relationship (Hall, 2004). In this mannertransformational leadership influences strategic hospitality alliances by sharing knowledge, developing trust and building commitment.

3. Conclusion

Existing findings in transformational leadership literature propose fewer errors and greater tolerance for leadership. There are many opportunities for managers to implement the role of transformational leadership (Waldman, et al., 2001). Transformational leaders choose visionary and effective applications instead of the bureaucratic capacity measures or contract specifications.

Elements, such as managers' decision-making and leadership styles, monitoring and control mechanisms, communication skills, harmonization among their cooperation cultures and information sharing skills among the partners can be listed as the harmonization criteria thatshould be fulfilled among alliances (Chi Cui et al., 2002).
If senior management acted in a willing and supportive way, other managers and employees could be provided with sufficient information about the alliance to be carried out. The managers should be aware of the fact that their employees might be worried about the reasons of creating an alliance, changes to occur following the establishment of an alliance, the situation of their employees, persons whom they will be accountable to, as well as the direction of new relationships, and thus inform their employees on such issues. The leadership capacity of managers is one of the most important elements thatare required by this process (Marco et al., 2003).Thus this paper investigates the influence of transformational leadership behaviors on strategic alliances from a lodging industry perspective.

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