



08, 09, 10 e 11 de novembro de 2022
ISSN 2177-3866

A Multiparadigmatic View of Strategic Alliances

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Agradecimento à órgão de fomento:

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development [grant number 130110/2021-3]; and the Mackenzie Research and Innovation Fund.

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Introdução

The construction of the strategic alliance construct involves several theoretical approaches with contributions from different areas of knowledge, such as economics, administration, and sociology. On the one hand, this fact has contributed to increasing the breadth of knowledge about alliances; on the other hand, there is a fragmentation of the knowledge generated by the epistemological differences between these approaches that leads to greater complexity in the development of research.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

These differences can become an obstacle for researchers developing these works and for practitioners, because it makes it difficult to compare and understand the concepts, in addition to the difficulty of fragmented strategic management literature. We defined the following research question for this paper: How have different theories been integrated into strategic management alliance research? We have analyzed the articles published on this subject in the last two decades, seeking to investigate the main theoretical approaches used as well as the central contributions of each of them.

Fundamentação Teórica

Transaction cost economics (TCE) directs its interest to the choice of alliance as the organizational form (Williamson, 1991). However, strategic management focuses on managing the alliance after its choice, as proposed by Gulati and Singh (1998), who coined the term coordination cost in reference to alliance management costs, as opposed to transaction cost term. Social network analysis theory explains alliance formation through a different path from TCE and strategic management. Its focus of analysis is on measuring and understanding social interactions (Granovetter, 1985).

Discussão

In addition to identifying the theories present in the articles and their related knowledge area, we identified their appearance frequency, with the purpose of analyzing their representativeness in the set. We identified as the main theories: strategic management, TCE, social network analysis, and game theory. Besides being used individually, we found that these theories were being used simultaneously as the theoretical basis for the articles. We also identified and detailed, in addition to the theories classified, the constructs present in the studies.

Conclusão

It is evident that the various contributions and advances in alliances in the area of strategic management in the last two decades were only possible due to the combination of theories and constructs from different areas of knowledge. It is possible to conclude that the multidisciplinary approach is a reality and is constantly being used in studies on alliances. Although important for the development of strategic alliances, multiparadigmatic approach should be treated with caution because the author may encounter great complexity when joining constructs from different origins.

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08, 09, 10 e 11 de novembro de 2022
ISSN 2177-3866

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