

Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance of Chinese SMEs in strategic alliances

Combined Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Anonymous Online Surveys for Adult Participants

Study Title: Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance of Chinese SMEs in strategic alliances

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Ethics/ERGO no: 73224

Version and date: Version 3.0 26th Jul 2022

What is the research about?

My name is Zhebing Zhou and I am a PhD business studies and management student at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom.

I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding how the entrepreneurial orientation of SMEs in China's strategic alliances affects their firm performance through different mediating factors. Researchers will use a theoretical framework to answer the following two research questions. The first question is how EO contributes to the alliance performance of the alliance enterprises in specific ways. The second is the degree of influence of network capability and knowledge management capability on alliance company EO, alliance performance and company performance relationship. Overall, this study proposes that a good entrepreneurial orientation under the regulation of network ability and knowledge management ability will significantly promote SMEs to better obtain resources and achieve alliance performance, thereby improving company performance.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 73224).

What will happen to me if I take part?

This study involves completing an anonymous questionnaire which should take approximately 25 minutes of your time. If you are happy to complete this survey, you will need to tick (check) the box below to show your consent. As this survey is anonymous, the researcher will not be able to know whether you have participated, or what answers you provided.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been approached to participate because you are one of managers of a small and medium-sized enterprise from China's information transmission, software and information technology service industries.

I am aiming to recruit around 300 participants for this study.

What information will be collected?

The questions in this survey ask for information in relation to your self-assessment of your company's entrepreneurial orientation, network capabilities, knowledge management, alliance innovation, performance and success and firm performance.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will not receive any direct benefits; however, your participation will contribute to knowledge in this area of research.

Are there any risks involved?

It is expected that taking part in this study will not cause you any psychological discomfort and/or distress, however, should you feel uncomfortable you can leave the survey at any time or contact the following resources for support:

zz10y19@soton.ac.uk

jp.tamvada@soton.ac.uk

What will happen to the information collected?

All information collected for this study will be stored securely on a password protected computer and backed up on a secure server. In addition, all data will be pooled and only compiled into data summaries or summary reports. Only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to this information.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of the researcher's dissertation/published in a journal/presented at conferences etc.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

What happens if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk, phone: + 44 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.

Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you have read and understood information on this form, are aged 18 or over and agree to take part in this survey.

Section 1. General characteristics

The following questions are descriptions of your general information, please answer them according to your true feeling.

Question 1.1

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Question 1.2

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60 or older

Question 1.3

What is your education level?

- ☐ Bachelor
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Doctor
- ☐ Other

Question 1.4

What are your total working year?

- ☐ Under 2 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ Over 21 years

Question 1.5

What is your job category?

- ☐ Ordinary employees
- ☐ Basic manager (e.g. Group leader))

- ☐ Middle manager (e.g. Department director)
- ☐ Senior manager (e.g. CEO, CTO and COO)

Section 2. Company detail form

The following questions are descriptions of company, please answer them according to your true feeling.

Question 2.1

What is the type of ownership structure of the organization you are currently working for?

- ☐ State-owned enterprise
- ☐ Non-state-owned enterprises
- ☐ Not clear

Question 2.2

What is the age of the organization you are currently working for?

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21 years and older

Question 2.3

How many full-time employees are in your organization?

- ☐ Less than or equal to 10 employees
- ☐ Between 11 and 100 employees
- ☐ Between 101 and 500 employees
- ☐ More than 500 employees

Question 2.4

Which industrial sector does your company belong to?

- ☐ Software industry
- ☐ Information transmission industry
- ☐ Information technology services industry

Question 2.5

Where is your organization located in China?

- ☐ Eastern coastal region (Developed region)
- ☐ Central Region (Medium developed region)
- ☐ Western Region (Underdeveloped region)

Question 2.6

What percentage of your firm's investment in innovation accounts for its total investment?

- ☐ Below 10%
- ☐ 11%-20%
- ☐ 21%-40%
- ☐ 41%-60%
- ☐ Over 61%

Question 2.7

What is your organization's innovation focus on?

- ☐ Product innovation
- ☐ Process innovation
- ☐ Technological innovation
- ☐ Business model innovation
- ☐ Service innovation

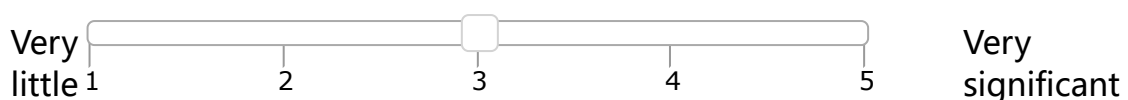
Question 2.8

How competitive is your company's industry?



Question 2.9

How has your company grown and improved over the past three years?



Question 2.10

To what extent does your organization have experience forming or participating in strategic alliances?

**Question 2.11**

How long has your company been in a strategic alliance?

- ☐ Below 2 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6-8 years
- ☐ More than 8 years

Question 2.12

What type of strategic alliances is your company more involved in?

- ☐ Horizontal alliance (cooperating with firms that operate as competitors in the same area)
- ☐ Vertical alliance (cooperating with firms that in the same supply chain)

Question 2.12b

Which of the following horizontal alliances is your organization more involved in?

- ☐ Horizontal symmetric alliance (cooperating with a similar-size firm)
- ☐ Horizontal asymmetric alliance (cooperating with a larger firm)

Question 2.12c

Which of the following vertical alliances is your organization more involved in?

- ☐ Upstream alliances (cooperating with upstream partners, e.g. suppliers)
- ☐ Downstream alliances (cooperating with downstream partners, e.g. dealers)

Question 2.13

Which of the following alliances is your company more involved in?

- ☐ Marketing alliances
- ☐ R&D alliances
- ☐ Both of above alliances

Question 2.14

What is the main mechanism for the partnership within the alliance in which your company participates?

- ☐ Formal mechanism
- ☐ Informal mechanism

Question 2.15

To what extent does your organization devote resources to strategic alliances?



Question 2.16

To what extent does your organization have experience exiting a strategic alliance?



Question 2.17

To what extent does your company want to exit the strategic alliance it is currently participating in?



1

2

3

4

5

Section 3. Entrepreneurial orientation

The following questions are descriptions of the entrepreneurial orientation in your company, please rate them according to your true feeling, 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neutral, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree, 7 is strongly agree.

Question 3.1

Autonomy

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your firm develops the necessary culture, processes, and incentives to inspire and support employee ideas for product innovation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm implements structural changes such as small self-governing groups to stimulate new ideas?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm has a proper balance between patience and tolerance for autonomous groups and the forbearance to reduce or eliminate initiatives that are not succeeding?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 3.2

Competitive Aggressiveness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your firm effectively uses an aggressive posture to combat industry trends that may threaten your survival or competitive position?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm enhances its competitive position by entering markets with drastically lower prices, copying the business practices or techniques of successful competitors, or	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

making timely announcements of new products or technologies?

To what extent do you agree that your firm knows when it is in danger of acting overly aggressive and avoid such actions which can lead to erosion of firm reputation and retaliation by competitors?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 3.3

Innovativeness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your firm actively encourages and stimulate innovation in technology, product markets and management processes?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm is able to spot innovations that are difficult for competitors to imitate? Is your company able to spot innovations that are difficult for competitors to imitate?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm is still able to secure an adequate proportion of its R&D investment during difficult economic times?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 3.4

Proactiveness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your firm strives to be a pioneer in the industry and can benefit from it?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm can effectively use the following methods to act proactively: proactively introduce new products and technologies in the competition and constantly seek to improve?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm typically continuously monitors customer feedback and evaluation trends to determine or predict future customer needs?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 3.5

Risk-taking

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your firm has always improved its competitive risk position by researching and evaluating risk factors to minimize uncertainty?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm always manages risk carefully to avoid innovating without adequate research and planning?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm has always improved its competitive risk position by combining effective technologies and processes in other areas?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 4. Network capabilities

The following questions are descriptions of the network capabilities in your company, please rate them according to your true feeling, 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neutral, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree, 7 is strongly agree.

Question 4.1

Coordination skills

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your firm always analyzes different strategic goals that can be achieved with different partners?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm matches the use of resources such as people and finances with personal relationships?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm always understands partners' goals, potential and strategies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm judges ahead of time to establish partnerships with potential partners?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your firm has dedicated coordinators for different partner companies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has definition discussions with partners to achieve mutual support and success?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 4.2

Relationship skills

To what extent do you agree that your firm has the ability to build good relationships with business partners?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has always successfully positioned itself as a partner?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm can always communicate and cooperate flexibly with partners?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm is always working with partners on constructive problem-solving?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 4.3

Partner knowledge

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the partner's market?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of partner products, programs and services?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of partner strengths and weaknesses?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a solid understanding of competitors' potential and strategies?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 4.4

Internal communication

To what extent do you agree that your firm always holds regular meetings for

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

each collaborative project?

To what extent do you agree that you have informal connections between employees of your firm?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that communication in your firm is often across projects and subject areas?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that different levels in your firm are always giving each other feedback and suggestions about their work?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that there is always a spontaneous exchange of information between different parts of your firm and employees?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Section 5. Knowledge management

The following questions are descriptions of the knowledge management in your company, please rate them according to your true feeling, 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neutral, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree, 7 is strongly agree.

Question 5.1

Orientation towards the development, transfer and protection of knowledge

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a system for codifying explicit knowledge?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm's employees can access required information through information technology and systems?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has mechanisms in place to encourage organizational members to share information?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm does a lot of cross-departmental projects?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.2

Continuous learning in the organization

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a professional plan for continuous learning?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your employees are happy to receive training that applies to their day-to-day work?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a system of continuous improvement for processes that have met the standards?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.3

An understanding of the organization as a global system

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your firm has a system to notify customers, suppliers and employees of current needs?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm encourages knowledge transfer through approaches such as cross-functional teams and advancement groups?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that best practices from one department in your firm can be shared with other departments?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has incentives for the achievement of overall goals?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has systems for capturing and processing relevant process information?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.4

Development of an innovative culture that encourages R&D projects

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your employees must receive the necessary training before participating in innovation projects?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has external benchmarking techniques that can understand the

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

success or failure of other companies
with new technologies?

To what extent do you agree that your
firm has good monitoring mechanisms
for innovation projects?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm can obtain valid input on the
development of new projects as
innovation projects are completed?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.5

Approach based on individuals

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your
firm gives employees the specific task of
identifying the information resources the
organization needs?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm encourages teamwork?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm has mechanisms for understanding
employee opinions and satisfaction?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm's employees can learn about and
achieve success in innovation projects?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.6

Competence development and management based on competences

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your
firm has a system for measuring
employee competency?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm's compensation and promotion
system promotes the development of
employee competencies, ideas and
knowledge?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your
firm uses benchmarking techniques to
improve employee capabilities?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 5.7

Knowledge creation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your company provides adequate support for new ideas with initiatives and activities?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that new ideas of your company reflect a significant elaboration or enrichment of existing knowing?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your company's knowledge can be disseminated, adopted and embedded in new products, services and systems?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Section 6. Alliances innovation, performance and success

The following questions are descriptions of alliances that your company participates and alliance innovation, performance and success of your company, please rate them according to your true feeling, 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neutral, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree, 7 is strongly agree.

Question 6.1

Alliance performance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that the alliances that your firm has participated in or formed are characterized by strong and harmonious relationships between alliance partners?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has achieved the primary goal of forming or joining an alliance?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has greatly enhanced its competitiveness after joining or forming an alliance?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your firm has successfully acquired effective resources, knowledge and technology from alliance partners after joining or forming an alliance?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 6.2

Alliance success

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

company's new product development program using alliances has been successful?

To what extent do you agree that most of the alliances in which your company participates have achieved alliance goals?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your company's sales and profits benefit from new products developed by the alliance?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that the alliances your company is participating in are developing better than those of your competitors?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that the innovative products developed by the alliances in which your company participates have achieved good market share?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Question 6.3

Alliances innovation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent do you agree that your company has prototyped ideas for new products through alliances over the past three years?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your company has launched new products in existing markets or developed new markets through alliances over the past three years?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your company has significantly enhanced existing products and services through alliances over the past three years?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To what extent do you agree that your company has significantly improved existing production or manufacturing technology or developed new technology through alliances over the past three years?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Section 7. Firm performance

The following questions are descriptions of the firm performance in your company, please rate them according to your true feeling, 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neutral, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree, 7 is strongly agree.

Question 7.1

Capital profitability

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior ROI over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior operating margins over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 7.2

Growth

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior sales growth over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior market share growth over the past five years compared to its most important competitor?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 7.3

Operational and financial efficiency

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior financial solvency (total debt to owned assets) over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior cost efficiency (total unit cost of product) over the past five years compared to its most important competitor?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 7.4

Stakeholder satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved excellent customer satisfaction over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved excellent employee satisfaction over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 7.5

Competitive position

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior domestic competitive position improvement over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent do you agree that your company has achieved superior international competitive position improvement over the past five years compared to its most important competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

感谢您填写这份问卷。