

# The Role of Cooperation Activities on Firm Perceived Performance. Evidence from Small and Medium Size Enterprises

Sher Ali<sup>1</sup> Dr Hazrat Bilal<sup>2</sup> Fawad Ullah<sup>3</sup>

1. MS Scholar, Hazara University, Mansehra

2. Center for Management and Commerce, University of Swat, Swat

3. MS Scholar, Hazara University, Mansehra

## Abstract

The density of globalization processes led to an incredible increase in the use of external sources by organization. Thus cooperation in SMEs is an established option to improve their performance and house-based knowledge. On a survey of 172 managerial level employees, this paper explore the relationships between firm cooperation activities and perceived firm performance by incorporating the structure equation model (SEM). The study finds that there is a positive relationships among cooperation activities and firm perceived performance of SMEs. The results also confirms that cooperation activities with suppliers and customers shows the most significant effect on perceived performance of SMEs.

**Keywords:** Cooperation, Performance, Cooperation activities, SMEs, Customers, Suppliers, Competitors

## 1. Introduction

The emerging of modernization usually viewed as the conversion of national economies into a single economy. Cooperation with industry and non-industry partners has been widely accepted as an important driver for SMEs performance. Cooperation has an incredible advantage for SMEs that having deficit resources (Zeng & Tam 2015). Cooperation activities of SMEs with different networks helps them to give rise to a mutual learning which may create new market opportunity, exchange of knowledge and development of skills (Senarathn & Salzman, 2016). Through Cooperation SMEs can utilize opportunities more valuably to compete in market place (McCallum & Price, 2013). It is essential for SMEs to tie cooperative activities with suppliers, customers and competitors in such emerging and dense market to improve their performance (Khalique, 2011). The researcher from developed as well as from developing countries underling cooperation activities and finds out, it is more important for SMEs to promote their performance (Yawar, 2015). Having such benefit of cooperation activities for SMEs, it need to further explore the cooperation activities between different market players and SMEs. In order to investigate such relationship this paper analyzes 172 managerial level employees by using the structural equation model. It is expected that the study will help to improve the cooperation activities in SMEs and will provide a platform for further research.

## 2. Literature review

Literature on cooperation designates that over the last years, there has been an increase of fundamental and systematic revolution in the way that firms undertake cooperation activities. In particular, there has been an incredible advancement in the use of outdoor cooperation by organization of all size (Mancinelli & Mazzanti, 2010). Cooperation is the primary and foremost key to efficacious performance of single and entire network (Mazzanti & Zoboli, 2010). Cooperation is broadly examined in modern literature and has a key role in different theories, for example, privatization of firms, decentralization governance and devaluation (Abramo *et al.*, 2009). Researchers characterized cooperation through numerous perspective that included logic of mutual action, inter-organization relationship and shared activity (Esper *et al.*, 2010). However, mostly cooperation is a procedure to work, oversee and solving of issues that hard or troublesome for a single organization (Anantatmula & Kanungo, 2010). Palazzo and Scherer (2008) give a comprehensive view about independently and collectively advantage of cooperation. Moreover Gazley (2008) separate cooperation from other coordination effort with respect to components, for example, joint possession decision, capacity to address diverse productively and common duty regarding partners.

By critical and widespread appraisal of literature in various business territories demonstrates that the word cooperation utilized among association over last decade. As later cooperation re-rose as solid scrutiny (Prakash & Deshmukh, 2010). Gustafsson and Witell (2012) investigate the modern cooperation course of action that enhance product quality, diminished conveyance time and cost of goods. As regard the term cooperation there are several types of cooperation relations such as moment of skill full employees, intermediaries association, trades union, government agencies, franchises and joint ventures. Anantatmula and Kanungo (2010) explore cooperation as, in types of joint marketing, utilized of equipment, production, common buys of raw materials, sharing of capacity, mutual product advancement. Cooperation is an Organizations connection in which all individual from chain work in the direction of a typical and arranged objective, accomplish change and observing execution (Chesbrough, 2010). As SMEs grasp scarcer resources, have less R&D, and generally face

more barriers and uncertainties to improve their performance while cooperation enable them the use of new technologies and reduction of uncertainties (Bala & Subraahmya, 2007).

Everywhere throughout the world SMEs are considered the foundation of economic development. Particularly in growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Pakistan it plays an important role. SMEs is proclaimed one of the fourth major driven development by the legislature of Pakistan (Khaliq & Shaari, 2010). It has been analyzed by business analyst and police creator that without the settled structure of SMEs, establishment of industrialization is difficult. To control the fluctuation and global market economy SMEs help to produce the entrepreneurship against them. In this era of contemporary economy particularly SMEs need to rely on outdoor sources. That help to emphasizing the ideas, knowledge resources, searching for broader range of outlying skills and expertise (Chesbrough, 2006). For long run survival SMEs need to give more focus toward cooperation activates (Bullinger *et al.*, 2004). The past literature explore that organizational cooperation activities is helpful movements and positively affects SMEs performance. Association among various firms cause future changes and modern insurgency (Afsarmanesh & Cmarinaha, 2008). The pragmatic studies shows that information and technology sharing by various outside sources upgrading association execution and strength (Tambunan, 2005). Cooperation can be a necessary factor in conditions where alliance and networking are needed to achieve economy of scale, integrate diverse skills, competencies and technologies (Muller & Doloreux, 2009). Because of aggressive market SMEs are unable to impact neither quality nor value (Johansson, 2006). In a mutual process SMEs can enhance their product design outline, improve standard, updating innovation and can accomplish the new market section (Visnjic & Looy 2013). Cooperation activities upgrade the capabilities and financial resources of SMEs which lead to improve their performance (Tomlinson & Fai, 2013).

Just a little number of articles explore about how SMEs can build up their abilities by making cooperative association with different market players (Anuradha & Urs, 2007). Wincent (2006) in a current research indicate that this pattern has continued and literature is yet deficient and constrained about participation of SMEs. Despite everything it required have more research that how SMEs cooperate with each other and in a cooperative activities. Some researcher prior on cooperation of SMEs and concluded that organization especially SMEs, are rarely interacting with cooperative network such as research organization, government agencies, intermediary organization, suppliers, customers and competitors (Kaufmann & Cooke, 2006). There are verities of reason for a firm to cooperate such as to penetrate new market, establishment of new business etc. (Bozic, 2009). Because of their size and fewer resources small firms face more challenges than large organization (Hanna & Walsh, 2002). Due to Limited time and resource obtainability companies are increasingly realizing the value of cooperation activities (Street & Cameron, 2007). Cooperation hence a path for SMEs to get these assets which not already available. Thus cooperation is an attractive way to utilize the scarce resource (Ylinenpää, 2006). Addition to that, cooperation is generally powerful way to reduce the time and cost for those product which may take longer time, for example, biotech and medicines production which required more equipment, tool and material which can't be found inside the boundary of the single firm (Powell & Grodal, 2009).

Several studies have explored the perceived firm performance measures, and many researcher argue that it difficult to choose a suitable indicator for the measurement of Performance (Romijn & Albaladejo, 2002). But in this study the perceived firm performance is measured by three index: cost minimization, sales maximization and new product development (Albaladejo, 2002; Chan & Henry 2003; Zeng & Tam 2015). Some empirical studies on cooperation distinguished that it's improve the overall performance of organization (Droge, 2000). Some other scientist found that firm which cooperate in their bunch with their subcontractor and different business affiliation indicates high level of performance then that who don't participate (Soroor *et al.*, 2009). In this way, a successful cooperation can improve the joint performance of the organizations if done legitimately. Germaine (2000) examined that cooperation assumed a key part in the integration of various unites of firm to improve the performance of entire inventory network. Larson and Kulchitsky (2000) from their review base investigation explore that relationship with customers, suppliers and competitors having beneficial outcome in case of performance improvement. Different research recommend that a nearby cooperation with suppliers, competitors and customers, toward an objective in common trust and open correspondence condition improve overall performance (Grover *et al.*, 2002).

### 3. Problem Statement

A large portion of Small and medium size enterprise are working independently in developing and in developed countries. Their operation is an independent player without creating cooperation with their suppliers, competitors and customers which limit their abilities to get grab in such emerging market opportunities, gain competitive edge over other and utilization of scarce resources which is outside of their boundaries. It is the fundamental reason that why the yearly turnover and benefit of SMEs working independently with regards to Pakistan is very low. Thus the aim of study is to investigate this issue.

#### 4. Research model and hypothesis development

Cooperation relationship increases the firm perceived performance (Bruque & Moyano, 2007). Cooperation with outer and inner entities increment overall performance of firm. After globalization of market SMEs facing more issues with contrasted to the past condition. Hence increment in rivalries causes shorten product life cycles, raised item multifaceted nature and extended availability to new specialized developments (Stank *et al.*, 2001). The present study measured firm cooperation activities and firm perceived performance of SMEs. Cooperation is further divided as Cooperation with customers, suppliers and competitors respectively.

H1: Cooperation activities having positive relationship with perceived firm performance.

That's the main hypothesis of the study which further sub-divided as following

Elg and Poksinska, (2012) concentrate on the cooperation with suppliers as fountain of information and recommend that cooperation with suppliers empower the organizations to diminish the risk and lead to enhance firm performance. While improving adaptability, product quality and market flexibility. Suppliers are the most profitable wellspring of information to create and enhance the firm performance (Nieto & Santamaria, 2007). Presently the use of this practice in market became increase (Tamaschke & lasch 2009). Organizations attempt to enhance their communication with suppliers by usage of different ways to decrease the error, risk, upgrade capacities and enhance performance. The benefits of relationship with suppliers has been explored more comprehensively by (Khalid & Hassan, 2000). As well in literature different researcher explore and strongly proposes that organization need to have a long run connection with their suppliers which improve their performance. Thus cooperation with suppliers help to use the new market opportunities (Park & Kim, 2003). On the basis of above literature we proposed the following hypothesis

H2: Cooperation with suppliers has a positive relationship with firm perceived performance.

The majority of studies have concentrated on the connections between cooperation with customers or client. Tie (2002) explore that cooperation with customer could be helpful when the aim is to create further novel and complex ideas for the improvement of firm performance. Information provide by customer is a valuable source for organization to enhance their performance (Becheikh, 2006). To face challenges and competition organizations required to increase simultaneously change in their cooperation strategies (Filiari, 2013). Hence information from customers always been of great importance to overcome such risk and uncertainty (Bayus, 2013). During the most recent couple of decades, organization strategies for cooperation with customers have been changing with customer roles. It is difficult yet but essential for SMEs to recognize and concentrate on important customers who encounter high advantages for organization performance (Bilgram *et al.*, 2008). Thus we can proposed the following hypothesis

H3: Cooperation with customer has a positive relationship with perceived firm performance.

The purpose of cooperation with competitors as to carry out research, establishment of standard and reduction of product duplicity (Tether, 2002). Hence, participation with competitors for SMEs advances their performance. It now becoming a popular practice among different organization and most of firm realizing the advantages of this paradigm shift. But it contain some flaws and thus still need to investigate its different components which may influenced the collaboration activities destructively or positively (Behrens & Krackhard, 2000). Thus, in this quickly expanding technologies, innovations and globalization it is difficult for a SMEs to work independently to compete in such situation with limited resource and expertise (Arvanitis *et al.*, 2008). Collaboration with competitors turn out to be a greater extent of significance due to decrease multifaceted nature, risk and market stability. Competitors' cooperation can help the issues such as incremental in manufacturing standard and technologies advancement (Gnyawali & Park 2011). On the premise of above literature we proposed the following hypothesis

H4: Cooperation with competitors has a positive relationship with firm perceived performance.

#### 5. Research methodology

The present survey study was quantitative study, where cross sectional data from an employees working in SMEs was collected through an instrument comprised of five point likert scale. The target population was managerial level positions and the data was collected a self-administrative adapted questionnaire consisting of a total of 28 questionnaire. A total of 172 questionnaires were received and analyzed by applying a structural equation model. The reliability of questionnaire for customer was 0.733 Mark Barratt, (2004) and reliability for supplier and competitors was 0.70 Zeng & Tam (2015).

#### 5.1 Results and Analysis of the study

Evidence from table1 shows that there is positive relationship between firm cooperation activities and perceived firm performance. The main hypothesis of this study was that there is positive relationships between firm cooperation activities and perceived performance ( $r = 0.655$ ) and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus it support the main hypothesis of the study. The relationship between perceived firm performance and cooperation with suppliers is positive ( $r = 0.679$ ) and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) thus it support first hypothesis of the study. The relationship

between perceived firm performance and cooperation with customers is positive ( $r = 0.667$ ) and significantly associated ( $p < 0.05$ ). It also support the second hypothesis of the study. Table1 elaborate that there is a positive relationship between perceived firm performances and cooperation with competitor ( $r = 0.659$ ) and highly significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 1

		FPP	CWC	CWP	CWS
Firm perceived performance	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	172			
Cooperation with customer	Pearson Correlation	.667**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	172	172		
Cooperation with competitors	Pearson Correlation	.655**	.659**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	172	172	172	
Cooperation with suppliers	Pearson Correlation	.679**	.724**	.676**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	172	172	172	172

The table 2 shows the characteristic of variation between cooperation activities and perceived firm performance. The value of R square for the given relationship is 0.461 which mean 46.1% variation in perceived firm performance occur due to cooperation with suppliers ( $p < 0.001$  with  $F = 145.337$ ). Thus Support the first hypothesis, that perceived firm performance is positively associated with suppliers' cooperation activities.

Table 2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			
						F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.679 <sup>a</sup>	.461	.458	.43429	.461	145.337	1	170	.000

The Table 3 shows test results of simple regression determined the significance  $F = 145$  at  $p < 0.05$  for the relationship between perceived firm performance and cooperation with suppliers. Hence the result supports first hypothesis of the study.

Table 3

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.412	1	27.412	145.337	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	32.064	170	.189		
	Total	59.475	171			

The strength of this relationship is revealed by the values of slope and intercept for perceived firm performance. From the Table 4 the constant value is 1.334 and a slop of 0.65 regression line represent that one unit change in cooperation with suppliers can significant predict 0.65 unites change in perceived firm performance.

Table 4

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.334	.201		6.636	.000
	Cws	.646	.054	.679	12.056	.000

The table 5 elaborate the characteristic of variation between independent variable and dependent variable. The value of R square is 44.5% variation in perceived firm performance occur due to cooperation with customers ( $p < 0.001$  with  $F = 136.554$ ). Thus it Support the second hypothesis that perceived firm performance is positively associated with customers' cooperation activities.

Table 5

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.667 <sup>a</sup>	.445	.442	.44047	.445	136.554	1	170	.000

The Table 6 shows the test results of simple regression determined the significance  $F=136.55$  at  $p < 0.05$  for the relationship between perceived firm performance and cooperation with customers. Thus result supports the second hypothesis of the study.

Table 6

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	26.493	1	26.493	136.554	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	32.982	170	.194		
Total	59.475	171			

Table 7 indicates the strength of this relationship is revealed by the values of slope and intercept for perceived firm performance. The constant value is 1.252 and a slop of 0.679 regression line represent that one unit variation in cooperation with customers can significant predict 0.679 unites change in perceived firm performance.

Table 7

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	1.252	.214			5.847	.000	
Cwc	.679	.058			.667	11.686	.000

The Table 8 shows the relationships of variation between perceived firm performance and cooperation activities of competitors. The R square value 0.43 which create 43% variation ( $p < 0.001$  &  $F = 136.554$ ). Thus it Support the third hypothesis of the study.

Table 8

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.655 <sup>a</sup>	.430	.426	.44670	.430	128.067	1	170	.000

The Table 9 shows the test results of simple regression determined the significance  $F=128.067$  at  $p < 0.05$  for the relationship between perceived firm performance and cooperation with competitors. Thus result supports the third hypothesis of the study.

Table 9

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	25.554	1	25.554	128.067	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	33.921	170	.200		
Total	59.475	171			

Table 10 shows the strength of this relationship is revealed by the values of slope and intercept for perceived firm performance. The constant value is 1.602 and a slop of 0.578 regression line represent that one unit variation in cooperation with competitors can significant predict 0.578 unites change in perceived firm performance.

Table 10

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	1.602	.191			8.411	.000	
Cwp	.578	.051			.655	11.317	.000

## 5.2 Discussion and conclusions

The current study was carried out to address the gap in the relationships between cooperation activities and perceived firm performance. On the basis of 172 sample of managerial level employee this study empirically

explore the cooperation activities and perceived performance of SMEs in Pakistan. The results shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between firm cooperation activities and perceived firm performance. As from the previous finding of Zeng & Tam (2015), Grekova & Calantone (2015) and Cao & Zhang (2011) the result reveal positive and significant impact of cooperation activities on perceived firm performance. This study also indicate that cooperation with customers and suppliers have more significant role in the improving of performance than that of competitors. This paper develops a comparative knowledge and awareness between different firm's cooperation activities. It also analyzes the proper way that how organization should cooperate with their customers, suppliers and competitors respectively. This study also suggest that, to maintain a long run cooperation activities, SMEs need to interpret open communication, mutual trust and respect for each other. A few investigations are led on firm cooperation activities yet particularly in setting of Pakistan less amount of research in the area of cooperation activities such as cooperation with suppliers, competitors and customers are conducted.

Particularly for SMEs it have to build up a lung run cooperation with their suppliers, competitors and customers to improve overall performance. This paper additionally demonstrates that cooperation is a legitimate approach for SMEs to enhance their performance and utilization of external resource. As from the theoretical viewpoint, the effort of this paper was to investigate whether organizations apply and utilized cooperation practices in their strategies with competitors, customers and suppliers. However, first it's required for a firm to focus on cooperation with customers and suppliers to motivate them (Driest & Weed, 2014) there after its need to move toward the cooperation with competitors (Gnyawali & Park 2011; Tidd *et al.*, 2010). Different cooperation activities recently gained much attention (Fournier & Wittenbraker, 2014; Driest & Weed, 2014). The most limitation part of this research was the owed to time and resource limitations. The considerable limitation was also the geographic coverage of population. This study just concentrations upon the cooperation connection among the SMEs of region Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. Thus the research may affect the reliability and generalizability for other countries and industries. The prominent limitation of the investigation originate from the fact that sample size comprise of just administrative level representatives, it won't not be the comparative outcome if the sample may divided into more subordinate level employees. Cooperation activities and perceived firm performance is a broad and widespread area. Hence it theoretical dimension need more research. It is suggest that the further research can be directed on cooperation relationships with government agencies, intermediaries' intuition, research organization, universities with controls variables such as firm size and age. It additionally recommends that to carry out more research in other geographic territories and nations.

## References

- Abramo, G., D'Angelo, C. A., Di Costa, F., & Solazzi, M. (2009). University–industry collaboration in Italy: A Bibliometric examination. *Technovation*, 29(6), 498-507.
- Anantamula, V. S., & Kanungo, S. (2010). Modeling enablers for successful KM implementation. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 14(1), 100-113.
- Anuradha, K., & Urs, S. (2007). Bibliometric indicators of Indian research collaboration patterns: A correspondence analysis. *Scientometrics*, 71(2), 179-189.
- Arvanitis, S., Kubli, U., & Woerter, M. (2008). University-industry knowledge and technology transfer in Switzerland: What university scientists think about co-operation with private enterprises. *Research Policy*, 37(10), 1865-1883.
- Becheikh, N., Landry, R., & Amara, N. (2006). Les factures strategies affectant innovation technologies dans les PME manufacturières. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, 23(4), 275-300.
- Bilgram, V., Brem, A., & Voigt, K. I. (2008). User-centric innovations in new product development—Systematic identification of lead users harnessing interactive and collaborative online-tools. *International journal of innovation management*, 12(03), 419-458.
- Bruque, S., & Moyano, J. (2007). Organizational determinants of information technology adoption and implementation in SMEs: The case of family and cooperative firms. *Technovation*, 27(5), 241-253.
- Chase, J. M., Abrams, P. A., Grover, J. P., Diehl, S., Chesson, P., Holt, R. D., & Case, T. J. (2002). The interaction between predation and competition: a review and synthesis. *Ecology letters*, 5(2), 302-315.
- Claycomb, C., Germain, R., & Dröge, C. (2000). The effects of formal strategic marketing planning on the industrial firm's configuration, structure, exchange patterns, and performance. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29(3), 219-234.
- Cooke, P., Kaufmann, D., Levin, C., & Wilson, R. (2006). The biosciences knowledge value chain and comparative incubation models. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 31(1), 115-129.
- Douma, M. U., Bilderbeek, J., Idenburg, P. J., & Looise, J. K. (2000). Strategic alliances: managing the dynamics of fit. *Long range planning*, 33(4), 579-598.
- Elg, M., Engström, J., Witell, L., & Poksinska, B. (2012). Co-creation and learning in health-care service

- development. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(3), 328-343.
- Esper, T. L., Ellinger, A. E., Stank, T. P., Flint, D. J., & Moon, M. (2010). Demand and supply integration: a conceptual framework of value creation through knowledge management. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(1), 5-18.
- Eveleens, C. (2010). Innovation management; a literature review of innovation process models and their implications. *Science*, 800(2010), 900.
- Filieri, R. (2013). Consumer co-creation and new product development: a case study in the food industry. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 31(1), 40-53.
- Gazley, B. (2008). Intersectoral collaboration and the motivation to collaborate: Toward an integrated theory. *Big ideas in collaborative public management*, 36-54.
- Gill, L., White, L., & Cameron, I. D. (2011). Service co-creation in community-based aged healthcare. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 21(2), 152-177.
- Gnyawali, D. R., & Park, B. J. R. (2011). Co-opetition between giants: Collaboration with competitors for technological innovation. *Research Policy*, 40(5), 650-663.
- Gunarathne, A. N., & Alahakoon, Y. (2016). Environmental Management Accounting Practices and their Diffusion: The Sri Lankan Experience. *NSBM Journal of Management*, 2(1).
- Gustafsson, A., Kristensson, P., & Witell, L. (2012). Customer co-creation in service innovation: a matter of communication. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(3), 311-327.
- Johansson, M. V., Heldt, T., & Johansson, P. (2006). The effects of attitudes and personality traits on mode choice. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 40(6), 507-525.
- Khalid, G. K., Farooq, S. U., & Raza, S. H. (2011). Empirical study of employment growth rate in small and medium enterprises. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 11(1).
- Larson, P. D., & Kulchitsky, J. D. (2000). The use and impact of communication media in purchasing and supply management. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 36(2), 29-39.
- Lasagni, A. (2012). How can external relationships enhance innovation in SMEs? New evidence for Europe. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 50(2), 310-339.
- Lee, S., Park, G., Yoon, B., & Park, J. (2010). Open innovation in SMEs. An intermediated network model. *Research policy*, 39(2), 290-300.
- Matook, S., Lasch, R., & Tamaschke, R. (2009). Supplier development with benchmarking as part of a comprehensive supplier risk management framework. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 29(3), 241-267.
- Mazzanti, M., & Zoboli, R. (2010). The environment as a driver of innovation and economic change. *Economia politica*, 27(2), 237-246.
- McCallum, S., Schmid, M. A., & Price, L. (2013). CSR: a case for employee skills-based volunteering. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 9(3), 479-495.
- Muller, E., & Doloreux, D. (2009). What we should know about knowledge-intensive business services. *Technology in society*, 31(1), 64-72.
- Nieto, M. J., & Santamaría, L. (2007). The importance of diverse collaborative activities for the novelty of product innovation. *Technovation*, 27(6), 367-377.
- Park, C. H., & Kim, Y. G. (2003). A framework of dynamic CRM: linking marketing with information strategy. *Business Process Management Journal*, 9(5), 652-671.
- Prakash, A., & Deshmukh, S. G. (2010). Horizontal inter-firm collaboration in flexible supply chains: a simulation study. *Journal of Studies on Manufacturing*, 1(1), 54-58.
- Radas, S., & Božić, L. (2009). The antecedents of SME innovativeness in an emerging transition economy. *Technovation*, 29(6), 438-450.
- Roberts, M. L., Liu, R. R., & Hazard, K. (2005). Strategy, technology and organizational alignment: Key components of CRM success. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 12(4), 315-326.
- Roininen, S., & Ylinenpää, H. (2006). New venture's entry strategies in their start-up processes. In *High Technology Small Firms Conference: 11/05/2006-13/05/2006*.
- Soroor, J., Tarokh, M. J., & Shemshadi, A. (2009). Theoretical and practical study of supply chain coordination. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 24(2), 131-142.
- Stank, T. P., Keller, S. B., & Daugherty, P. J. (2001). Supply chain collaboration and logistical service performance. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 22(1), 29-48.
- Street, C. T., & Cameron, A. F. (2007). External relationships and the small business: A review of small business alliance and network research. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 45(2), 239-266.
- Tether, B. S., & Hipp, C. (2002). Knowledge intensive, technical and other services: patterns of competitiveness and innovation compared. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 14(2), 163-182.
- Tödting, F., Lehner, P., & Kaufmann, A. (2009). Do different types of innovation rely on specific kinds of

- knowledge interactions? *Technovation*, 29(1), 59-71.
- Tomlinson, P. R., & Fai, F. M. (2013). The nature of SME co-operation and innovation: A multi-scalar and multi-dimensional analysis. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 141(1), 316-326.
- Van de Vrande, V., De Jong, J. P., Vanhaverbeke, W., & De Rochemont, M. (2009). Open innovation in SMEs: Trends, motives and management challenges. *Technovation*, 29(6), 423-437.
- Wincent, J. (2006). *On building competitiveness in strategic SME networks: Empirical analysis of 54 firms in two networks* (Doctoral dissertation, Luleå tekniska universitet).
- Yawar, S. A. (2015). Corporate Social Responsibility in Supply Chains: *Relevance of Supplier Development* (Vol. 6). Kassel University press GmbH.