

学位論文及び審査結果の要旨

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論文の要旨

Buyer-supplier relationship management in business-to-business exchange (B2B) is important to economic organisations, especially in the condition of business uncertainty and high competitiveness as today (Wang et al., 2016). Tight cooperation and good relationship with business partners will bring a number of benefits to a company, such as reducing transaction cost (Dahlstrom and Nygaard, 1999), improving performance (Dyer and Chu, 2003). However, business partners tend to have opportunistic behaviours in B2B exchange (Williamson, 1985), and finding an effective mechanism to control opportunistic behaviours is a common problem that most companies are facing today (Wang et al, 2021).

In Japan, the recent cases of Takata Cooperation and Kobe Steel show that even though trust (Dyer and Chu, 2003; Sako and Helper, 1998), intimacy (Lincoln et al., 1998) and long-term orientation (Dyer and Chu, 2003) between assemblers and suppliers and among suppliers in manufacturing companies in Japan have been particularity emphasised, and were believed to reduce the chance for such opportunistic behaviours, the problem has still occurred (Miyamoto, 2017; Kobe Steel, 2018). In academic research, the concept of opportunism has been introduced in transaction cost theory and B2B exchange literature and is commonly defined as “self-interest seeking with guile”. In practice, opportunism manifestations include behaviours such as “lying, stealing, cheating, and calculated efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, obfuscate, or otherwise confuse” (Williamson, 1985, p.47). Opportunism is one of the important issues in B2B exchanges because it reduces relationship performance (Trada and Goyal, 2017), increases transaction cost (Williamson, 1985) and governance cost (Dahlstrom and Nygaard, 1999), or even leads to bankruptcy (Miyamoto, 2017). The serious consequences of opportunism in B2B exchange emphasize the importance of understanding how to control it (Wang et al., 2021). In the same vein, this study is going to investigate important influencing factors on opportunism in B2B exchange.

The aim of this study is fourfold. First, it attempts to contribute to TCT by focussing on individual level opportunism as many existing studies assess organisational level opportunism (Provan and Skinner, 1989; Parkhe, 1993; Handley et al., 2012; Bhattacharya et al., 2015; Huo et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2021; Han et al., 2022). It is considered that individual opportunism is as crucial as organisation opportunism because even though most business transactions are carried out by individual agents (Perrone et al., 2003), individual opportunism can damage the entire corporate reputation and firm's performance (Lyons et al., 1990). For this reason, currently, there has been a research trend focusing on individual opportunism in B2B relationships (Tangpong et al., 2010; Hawkins et al., 2012; Hawkins et al., 2013; Gelderman et al., 2020). Our study is a part of this general trend.

Second, this study adds insights into inconsistencies in the previous research findings about the impacts of trust and intimacy on opportunism by investigating the moderating factors. Trust and intimacy have been considered important factors when examining B2B exchange (Williamson, 1985; Sako, 1991; Liu et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2016; Mikami et al., 2022); however, there are inconsistencies among previous findings of the influence of trust and intimacy on opportunism since some researchers indicate that trust and intimacy among buyer agents and supplier agents in B2B exchange can help to reduce opportunistic behaviours (Brass et al., 1998; Das and Teng, 2001; Wathne et al., 2001; Kong et al., 2014), while other researchers indicate that trust and intimacy increases the risk of individual agents engaging in opportunistic behaviours (Wicks et al., 1999; Molina-Morales et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2021). In this study, alternative suppliers and job demands which were found to be important antecedents of opportunism (Williamson, 1993; Cannon et al., 2010; Crawford et al., 2010), are considered as the conditions in which individuals act opportunistically in B2B transactions despite high levels of trust and intimacy being established.

Third, this study is going to examine the impact of buyer agents' boundary spanning capabilities and integrity on supplier agent opportunism. Boundary theory suggests that in B2B exchange, boundary spanning capabilities and integrity of buyer agents such as purchasing professional knowledge, ability to reach compromise, strategic communication, have great importance in managing and sustaining relationship with supplier agents and supplier firms (Zhang et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2015; Vesalainen et al., 2020). This study is going to relate those boundary spanning capabilities of buyer agents in managing supplier agent opportunistic behaviours.

Fourth, this study looks particularly into Japanese manufacturing companies, which stress the importance of trust (Dyer and Chu, 2003; Sako, 1991) and intimacy (Lincoln et al., 1998) in B2B relationships. In this context, it is possible to bring to light under what circumstances an individual will act opportunistically in business transactions.

This study is going to examine the influencing factors of supplier opportunism. In business exchanges, it is assumed that suppliers' general goal is to sell their products with the highest sales and prices at the lowest cost, so there is a higher tendency that suppliers behave opportunistically with buyers to obtain the goal (Bhattacharya et al., 2015). Therefore, to add insights into the relevant theories, this study states the following research questions:

RQ 1: From buyer agents' point of view, what important individual factors and organizational factors impact supplier agent opportunism and how?

RQ 2: From the buyer agents' point of view, what factors moderate the impact of trust and intimacy on supplier agents' opportunism?

RQ 3: From the buyer agents' point of view, what extent do buyer agents' boundary spanning capabilities and long-term orientation between buyer firm and supplier firm impact supplier agent opportunism and how?

In order to address the research objectives and questions, this study applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods. To address the first research question: "From buyer agents'

point of view, what important individual factors and organisational factors impact supplier agent opportunism and how?”, inductive exploratory interview research was applied. The data were gathered from inductive exploratory interviews of 24 practitioners who are working as buyer agents in the sales and purchasing section and participate in B2B exchange with suppliers. The period of data collection was from December 2018 to March 2020. The data were analyzed by three cycles of coding: Open coding, theoretical coding and cross-interview comparison. The results indicate that organisational factors such as buyer-supplier companies’ long-term relationship, supplier company’s power, co-worker support for buyer agents, occupational pressure for supplier agents and individual factors such as close relationship between buyer agents and supplier agents, buyer agents’ purchasing knowledge, communication skill and characteristics of honesty in negotiation are important factors to consider in managing supplier agents’ opportunism.

To address the second and the third question, the methodology of a survey questionnaire was applied. The data were collected from a survey of 406 employees in the sales and planning section of manufacturing companies in Japan who are working as buyer agents to work with supplier agents from supplier firms. Data were collected between February 2021 and April 2021 and analysed by linear regression and conditional process written by Hayes (2017) model 1. SPSS and Amos software were used for the analyses. The survey results show that that the degree of intimacy between buyer agents and supplier agents, the degree of trust that a buyer agent places on supplier firms and supplier agents, and the degree of strategic communication capability and integrity of buyer agents negatively impact supplier agents’ opportunism. The degree of purchasing professional knowledge and ability to reach compromise of buyer agents positively impact supplier agents’ opportunism. Moreover, the negative impact of supplier firm trust on opportunism will be stronger in the condition that the degree of alternative suppliers is high; the negative impact of supplier agent trust on opportunism will be weaker in the condition that the degree of job demands is high. Long-term orientation between buyer firm and supplier firm is an important condition that changes the positive impacts of purchasing professional knowledge and the ability to reach compromise of buyer agents on supplier agents’ opportunism from positive to negative. Furthermore, it enhances the negative impact of strategic communication capability and integrity of buyer agents on supplier agents’ opportunism.

審査結果の要旨

本論文は、帰納的な定性研究からデータに根差した仮説を導き出し、順次その仮説を大規模な定量データで実証した、いわゆる探索的順次デザインに基づく混合研究方法である。帰納的な定性研究のメリットである最新の経営的課題と実務家の関心に沿った仮説を導き出すことに成功し、一方デメリットである外部妥当性の低さという弱点を、その後の定量調査を行うことで補っている点で、定性・定量研究双方の短所を補いつつ長所を活かした包括的な研究となっている。また、日本製造企業は、信頼ベースの取引を行っていたという既存文献が多い中、日本企業における探索インタビュー調査を通じて機会主義的行動が問題として浮上した。それに着目し、信頼ベースの伝統がある日本製造企業を調査対象にしながら、どのような状況において機会主義的行動が発生してしまうのかというテーマを選んだ着眼点は興味深い。

さらに、取引コスト理論や関連理論の今日にいたるまでの発展経緯について膨大な既存研究を丹念にまとめ、そこからいまだに残る理論の問題点を明確に指摘している点は、今後、同じテーマで研究を始める研究者にとっておおきな意味を提供できる点も高く評価できる。

本論文は、組織ではなく、個人レベルの機会主義的行動に焦点を当てた点、また多くの研究がされているバイヤー側ではなくサプライヤー側のエージェントの機会主義的行動に着目している点、また既存研究では筆者の概念的主張にとどまっていた機会主義的行動を発生させる要因を定量データによって実証した点などが新規性としてあげられるが、それらは必ずしも取引コスト理論や他の関連理論を大きくブレイクスルーをしたとは言えないという限界がある。

また、本研究はバイヤー側とサプライヤー側の双方からデータを収集したわけではなく、バイヤーのサプライヤー・エージェントに対する認識をアンケート調査で聞いている点で、回答者バイアスのリスクにさらされている可能性も排除できない。

これらの問題は存在する一方、筆者は研究の限界として明確に認識して記述しており、今後継続的に調査を行うことでバイアスや様々な問題点を解決しさらなる理論の発展と貢献をめざすと主張していることから将来の理論の改善と発展が期待できる。またこれらの問題を差し引いても本論文は理論と実務の双方にとって大きな示唆を与えるものになっていると評価している。なお、本論文には、『EurOMA 国際学会プロシーディングス』に掲載された論文3編が含まれている。

Pham, T.X.T. and Yokozawa, K. (2020). Factors influencing on opportunism in retailer supplier relationship: Exploratory research. Paper presented at the 27th International Annual European Operations Management Association (EurOMA) Conference, Warwick, UK.

Pham, T.X.T. and Yokozawa, K. (2021). The impact of trust and intimacy on opportunism: The moderating roles of alternative suppliers and job demands. Paper presented at the 28th International Annual European Operations Management Association (EurOMA) Conference, Sussex, UK.

Pham, T.X.T. and Yokozawa, K. (2022). The impact of boundary spanning capability and integrity on opportunism: The moderating role of long-term orientation. Paper presented at the 29th International Annual European Operations Management Association (EurOMA) Conference, Berlin, Germany.

以上の審査結果より、本論文審査委員一同は、本学府の博士号審査基準②に照らして、Pham

Thi Xuan Thoa 氏の学位請求論文 “Factors influencing individual opportunism in business-to-business exchange: Empirical research in Japanese manufacturing companies” が博士（経営学）の学位を授与するに値するものと判断する。

令和4年6月15日

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