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Antecedents and Outcomes of Absorptive Capacity - A Meta-Analysis

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ABSTRACT
Absorptive capacity (AC) is a firm’s ability to identify, integrate and exploit external knowledge. Absorptive capacity is a key concept in knowledge management and IS literature. Although there have been over 600 studies involving AC, there is little consensus regarding its conceptualization and operationalization. To further understand AC and its antecedents and outcomes, we meta-analyzed 67 studies on it. Our findings suggest that prior knowledge, external sources, social integration, R&D intensity, activation triggers, and external power relationships are positively associated with AC, which in turn improves firm’s overall performance. However, surprisingly, we find that R&D intensity (one of the most commonly used measures of AC) is distinct from AC and is only weakly correlated with AC. The implications and future research directions are also discussed.

Keywords
Absorptive Capacity, Meta-analysis, R&D, Firm Performance