Marketing Strategic Alliances: The Hotel Sector in Jordan

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Abstract

This study tries to explore why hotels are forming marketing strategic alliances; and identifies factors that may impact the success of strategic alliances in the hotel sector in Jordan. The empirical work involved the development of questionnaires which were used for data collection. The study sample consisted of 110 managers from 75 hotels located in three cities: namely Amman, Aqaba and Petra. The main results of the study show empirical evidence are consistent with the notion that the gains from alliances are not shared equally by all the partners. The result also give another strong indication the strategic alliance is playing a crucial role in the hotel sector. Additionally, the findings revealed the most important factor in motivating the adoption of marketing strategic alliances is knowledge sharing and cooperative learning followed by improving performance. Meanwhile, the lack of trust has been found as the first main barrier to marketing strategic alliances' success. Results also indicate that hotel managers have a positive attitude towards marketing strategic alliances.

Keywords: marketing, strategic alliances, alliances, hotel sector, Jordan

1. Introduction

In the business environment organizations are increasingly having to deal with a wide range of social, financial, political, regulatory and cultural challenges (Coulson - Thomas, 1997), the impact of which, among other factors, is the demand for greater efficiency, better quality and lower costs (Urden, 2002). Hence, quality management has emerged not only as the most significant and enduring strategy in ensuring the very survival of organizations, but also a fundamental route to business excellence (Wang and Ahmed, 2001). Strategic alliances are more than simple instrumental means for achieving collective goals directly benefiting the collaborators. Strategic alliances are becoming one of the main tools firms have to improve and maintain their level of competitiveness, especially when their small size prevents them from undertaking many projects on their own (Lowensberg, 2010).

It has been said ‘an optimist and pessimist make the best partnership because one sees the profits while the other sees the risks’. In 1966, Adler stated (1966:59) “I venture to forecast that symbiotic marketing will become more and more important to business”. Adler was referring to the pooling of resources to provide benefits to companies that were not available to either individually. He identified some of the benefits of *'symbiotic marketing'* as capitalizing on scientific breakthroughs, decreasing the costs of new product development to individual companies, stimulating synergism, creating opportunities for diversification and reducing risks. At the same time, Drucker has stated the greatest change in corporate culture, and the way business is being conducted, may be the accelerating growth of relationships based not on ownership but on partnership (Drucker, 1996). Varadarajan and Rajaratnam (1986) reviewed the concept of symbiotic marketing two decades on, identifying differences in the nature and scope of these business relationships. They described implementation of intensive growth and diversification strategic through symbiotic relationships, citing examples of joint promotion, market development and market penetration activities. With increasing costs associated with technology and product development combined with changing consumer preferences, symbiotic relationships offer an “alternative to internal development, mergers, and acquisition in regard to various growth opportunities” (Varadarajan and Rajaratnam, 1986:16).

Strategic alliances are a logical and timely response to intense and rapid changes in economic activity, technology, and globalization (Doz and Hamel, 1999), since they infuse existing hierarchical structures with the flexibility and adaptability needed to cope with a highly complex and rapidly changing environment. Particularly when it comes to technological innovation, strategic alliances tend to be an appropriate strategic response to the

growing demands that firms face for innovative products and services. Firms have always been collaborating in order to cope with the demands of the market (Poulymenakou and Prasopoulou, 2004). Common forms of marketing alliances focus on customer service, promotion and distribution (Das et al., 2003). The specific forms of cooperation include shared brand names, advertising or promotion, shared distribution channels, sales force and sales offices, sharing of marketing and service networks and cross selling of products (Porter, 1985). Such alliances, particularly the one with a distributor or a complementary product manufacturer, can give firms entry into new geographical markets or customer segments thereby increasing product demand (Adler, 1966). Other benefits of marketing alliances include possible lowering of the fixed costs of the partners through sharing of common marketing activities (Porter, 1985).

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the global tourism market will triple in size by 2020. Tourism benefits local economies substantially by increasing foreign exchange earnings, creating employment and investment opportunities, increasing government revenues, developing a country's image, and supporting all sectors of the economy as well as local communities. Tourism is of vital importance to the national economy of Jordan. It is the Kingdom's largest export sector, and the second largest private sector employer, and second highest producer of foreign exchange(Aldehayyat et al., 2011). Tourism contributes more than US$800 million to Jordan's economy and accounts for approximately 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Ministry of Tourism and Antiguites, 2009). Tourism is considered as a key driver of Jordan's economy; currently it is the single largest employer. Jordan is one of the few countries in the Middle East to witness annual growth in the tourism industry. With its regional spread, tourism is an ideal industry to diffuse benefits across Jordan, and during the past few years, tourism has been responsible for generating a significant increase in foreign and domestic investment (Aldehayyat, 2011; Aldehayyat et al., 2011). Employment in the tourism industry, including indirect employment, was estimated at around 130,000 (11% of the work force). The tourism industry itself employs 34,405 people, of which 77.5% were in the hotels and restaurant industry (Fischer et al., 2009).

From the above discussion, this study will focus on the hotel sector which is an important part of tourism industry. At the same time, this study will increase the knowledge about the alliances marketing strategy; marketing tourism and hospitably and hotel sector in Jordan. At the same time, this study tries to explore why hotels are forming marketing strategic alliances; and identifies factors that may impact the success of strategic alliances in the hotel sector.

2. Previous Research

It would appear that there is still little understanding among business executives of how strategic alliances operate and evolve and that own managers' perceptions play a role in strategic alliance practice (Pansiri, 2005). Broadly defined, strategic alliances are relationships where partners bring a particular skill or resource, usually one that is complementary, and by joining forces both are expected to profit from the others experience (Jeannet and Hennessey, 1992). Das et al. (2003) define strategic alliances simply as co-operations that are important to the partners and that will help them pursue their objectives. Newman and Chaharbaghi (1997) classify alliances along a fairly similar continuum based on whether the alliance formation is based on a defensive or offensive strategy. Jones et al. (2003: 337) define strategic alliances as "long-term, trust based relations that entail highly relationship-specific investments in ventures that cannot be fully specified in advance of their execution". Additionally, it implies that successful strategic alliances are based on trust or other relational factors such as inter-personal attraction and social ties. Meanwhile, Elmuti and Kathawala (2001:205) have defined strategic alliances as "partnerships of two or more corporations or business unites, that work together to achieve significant objectives that are mutually beneficial".

In addition to the definitions and continua, some authors use metaphors to describe strategic alliances. Ohmae (1989) describes the relationship between partners in an alliance as an "entente" (Ohmae, 1989:143) that involves a share in the control, similar to the relationship between partners in a new marriage. Lowensberg (2010:1093) state that a strategic alliance is the planned working together of various organizational partners to achieve one or more goals. Using either definition results in synergies, i.e. the "partners" can achieve more jointly than they could independently. Strategic alliances have been used in a variety of situations when two or more organizations join forces to achieve a mutual objective (Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001; Pansiri, 2005; Lowensberg, 2010).

2.1 Motives in Using Marketing Strategic Alliances

One of the most notable trends in recent years has been the growth in the popularity of alliances between competitors, prospective competitors, and even supply chain members (Solesvik, and Westhead, 2010). Das et

al.(2003) stated that by joining forces in producing components, assembling models and marketing their products, companies can realize cost saving not achievable with their own small volumes; filling the gaps in technical expertise and or knowledge of local markets; learning from each other (i.e. joint research). Hence, investigating what drives one firm to cooperate with another firm has been an interesting topic for researchers over a decade.

Child et al. (2005) identified the following motives reported by firms to form a strategic alliance: transaction-cost motives; resource-based motives; strategic motivations with regard to competitive position of the firm; learning objectives; and motives relating to risk reduction, new market entry, and first-mover advantage. Strategic motives shape the selection criteria used by firms considering strategic alliances (Dong and Glaister, 2006). A firm may seek a strategic alliance in order to gain access to the resources and competencies owned by a potential partner. In some instances, a resource deficient firm cannot develop, or is not willing to internally develop required resources and competencies. It may be costly to acquire the required resources and competences, and they may be only required for a short period of time. Doz (1996) explored cooperation relating to strategic alliances with reference to five dimensions (i.e. goals, environment, task, process, and skills). He suggests that successful alliances are flexible and adaptive, and they are associated with committed partners, partners that build trustful links, and partners that exhibit learning with reference to the five dimensions.

Leaning has been regarded as one of the major motives for strategic alliances (Inkpen, 2005). Hamel et al. (1989) also asserted that alliances can be used to learn the skills of the other partner. The authors claimed that if there was not a mutual learning process, then the alliances would become just outsourcing agreements without using the full potentials of the strategic alliance concept(Mellat-Parast, 2007). Jones et al. (2003) indicated that leaning is achieved through sharing information and knowledge within individual and organizations. In fact, firms enter alliances to get knowledge, information and other sources. The term 'cooperative learning' refers to the ability of partners in sharing knowledge, information and resources (Morrison and Mezentseff, 1997). Organizations develop cooperative relationship through creating a learning environment so that they can facilitate mutual learning. Cooperative learning emphasizes the role of cooperation in alliances, rather than competition (Morrison and Mezentseff, 1997; Mellat-Parast, 2007).

Both practitioners and scholars recognize continuous improvement as one of the major principles of quality management (Mellat-Parast, 2007). In a recent study of strategic alliances in construction management firms, Lo and Yeung (2004) argued that continuous improvement played an important role in strategic alliances.

Generally speaking, companies undertake strategic alliances for many reasons: to enhance their productive capacities, to reduce uncertainties in their internal structures and external environments, to acquire competitive advantages that enables them to increase profits, or to gain future business opportunities that will allow them to command higher market values for their outputs. Some authors claim it can dramatically improve an organization's operations and competitiveness. Companies are forming alliances to obtain technology, to gain access specific markets, to reduce financial and political risk, and achieve or ensure competitive advantage (Wheelen and Hungar, 2000). The strategic motives for organizations to engage in alliance formation vary according to firm-specific characteristics and the multiple environmental factors. As summarized below, this diversity has triggered the development of several classification schemes in the theoretical literature (Doz and Hamel, 1999; Mellat-Parast, 2007; Elmuti and Kathawala; 2001; Zineldin and Dodourova; 2005; Solesvik, and Westhead, 2010; Lowensberg, 2010):

1) Entering new markets;
2) Adjust to environmental changes;
3) Gaining access to new technology,
4) Knowledge sharing; cooperative learning and embedded skills;
5) Achieving vertical integration, recreating and extending supply links
6) Acquiring means of distribution;
7) Diversifying into new businesses;
8) Improving performance;
9) Cost sharing, pooling of resources;
10) Developing products, technologies, resources;
11) Reduce financial and political risk ;
12) Achieving competitive advantage;

Such motivational diversity characterizes alliance formation in many industries, and theorists have proposed several explanatory schemes to classify and analyze the range of collaborative solutions adopted by firms. According to the above discussion the following hypothesis has been proposed

H1: Manager motives in using the marketing strategic alliances are positive

2.2 Barriers to Marketing Strategic Alliances' Success

In general, most studies tend to focus on successful stories of strategic alliances and ignore the fact that perhaps they fail. Strategic alliances are attractive, but they are not simple or easy to create, develop, and support. Experience with international strategic alliances has shown that they face a number of problems, which can often result in alliance failure. The failure rate of strategic alliances is projected to be as high as 70 percent (Kalmbach and Roussel, 1999).

Whichever, firm has contributed more towards the creation of the intellectual capital will be more at risk, unless of course, both contribute equally (Das et al., 2003). Several reasons are also given for the under-performance and failure of strategic alliances. The most common reasons include a break down in trust, a change in strategy, the value did not materialize, the cultures did not mesh very well and the systems were not integrated. According to a study conducted by the Financial Times (1999), the main reason strategic alliances fail to meet expectations is 'the failure to grasp and articulate their strategic intent'. There is a need that the problems facing strategic alliances to be analyzed more fully to determine the true reasons why over 70 % of strategic alliances fail (Kalmbach and Roussel, 1999):

2.2.1 Lack of Trust

McAllister (1995) defines trust as the degree to which parties are willing to act on the words, actions and decisions of others. Creed and Miles (1996) take this further and argue that the most critical factor in increasing (or decreasing) trust is the number of positive exchanges. While trust is the catalyst for learning in strategic alliances, the role of trust in the success of strategic alliances is critical. Ring and Van de Ven (1994:110) defined trust as “an individual’s confidence in the good will of the others in a given group and belief the others will make efforts consistent with the group’s goal”. Trust between partners is widely viewed as a key issue within the partner selection process (Bierly and Gallagher, 2007). Trust may not even be a required component of these alliances. Conversely, long-term, network and constellation type strategic alliances are built upon a foundation of trust. In fact, the literature explicitly mentions that a “lack of inter-firm trust” is one of the main reasons for strategic alliance failure (Kelly et al., 2002). According to them, calculus based trust occurs when the partners have a limited knowledge of each other. Given that limited knowledge, the partners assess the viability of the alliance by weighing the potential risks of the alliance against the potential benefits of the alliance.

According to Cullen et al. (2000), benevolent trust is a belief that an alliance partner will behave with good intentions towards the alliance and the partner. It is a belief based on a subjective assessment of the partner and represents the emotional side to trust. In order to develop benevolent trust, each partner must exhibit a behavioural tendency towards helping and supporting the other partner, a tendency to promote and seek closeness with the other partner by encouraging sharing, understanding, mutual interest and openness (Phan et al., 2002).

Trust can lead to lower transaction costs, which leads to competitive advantage. Empirical studies also show that trust can influence the performance of the alliance. Gulati et al. (2000) indicated that strategic alliances promoted trust and reduced transaction costs. Therefore, trust directly affects performance. In the presence of trust, organizations rely on less detailed contracts, which are costly. Trust affects inter-partner cooperation, reducing the need to check on the other partners and allowing more energy and time to be directed towards long-term goals of mutual benefit (Cullen et al., 2000).

2.2.2 Lack of Coordination between Partners (Partner Selection)

Among factors considered for the evaluation of an appropriate partner, common strategic direction is one that needs to be taken into account. If firms entering into an alliance share common strategic (intent) direction, such a direction helps them to have better understanding of their mutual goals and expectations. Lo and Yeung (2004) pointed out that having a common strategic direction is a requirement for effective supplier integration in strategic alliances. It has been suggested that the selection of the right partner is a key determinant of strategic alliance success (Dong and Glaister, 2006). Partners that had prior relationships before the strategic alliance may understand one another and this made lead to less potential for conflict during the alliance, which may increase the probability of a successful alliance (Solesvik, and Westhead, 2010).

Partner selection is regarded as critical in strategic alliance formation. Adopting an alliance strategy for the

wrong purpose, selecting the wrong partners or entering the alliance with the wrong attitudes and lack of trust will almost inevitably lead to failure (Mason, 1993; Solesvik, and Westhead, 2010). Researchers indicate that finding the right alliance partner is extremely important because the failure of many alliances can easily be traced to partner selection at the planning stage. In choosing appropriate partners, strategic alliance research identifies four Cs (compatibility, capability, commitment and control) as criteria for successful pre-selection of alliance partners. Most research on partner selection suggests that neither party should be dominant in the relationship (Hausler et al., 1994), i.e. partners in an alliance should be equal in terms of both their relative contributions (Johnson et al., 1996) and their risks (Mason, 1993). Partners choose a specific alliance form not only to achieve greater control, but also for more operational flexibility and realization of market potential. Their expectation is that flexibility will result from reaching out for new skills, knowledge, and markets through shared investment risks (Solesvik, and Westhead, 2010).

2.2.3 Lack of Clear Goals and Objectives

It is also important during alliance formation for potential partners to be clear about their individual strategies and goals, and only then to engage in a partner search and selection process. The partners must have clearly understood roles and the goals of the alliances must be clear. Gulati et al. (2000) pointed out that most strategic alliances were neither strictly competitive nor strictly cooperative; rather they involved mixed motives where the partners had both private and common interests. Zollo et al. (2002) pointed out the importance of firm-level characteristics (culture, strategic orientation) on alliance performance.

2.2.4 Performance Risks

A performance risk is the probability that an alliance may fail even when partner firms commit themselves fully to the alliance. The sources of performance risk according to the Das et al. (2003) in include environmental factors, such as government police changes, war, and economic recession; market factors such as fierce completion and demand fluctuations; and competence in critical areas.

According to the above discussion the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: Manager evaluations regarding the marketing alliances strategy are negative

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample Selection

Sekaran (2003) has defined a research population as the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. In the light of these definitions, the targeted population includes customers and branch managers of nine major local and foreign banks in Amman; the capital city of Jordan.on the other hand, Sekaran (2003) defined a sample as 'a subset of population'. The population of this research is drawn from three cities in Jordan, Amman; Aqaba and Petra. Amman is the capital and the most important city in Jordan. Petra is considered as one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Petra and Aqaba are the most important archaeological sites in Jordan. Hotels which are located in this region operate in a highly competitive and dynamic environment.

Names and addresses of targeted hotels were drawn from the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities website. The questionnaire has been divided into three parts. Part one was designed to get the information regarding the respondents and their hotels. Part two aimed at obtaining information about the factors that motivate or inhibit respondents in terms of using marketing alliances strategy. While part three has been developed in order to get information about factors for strategic alliance failure. Series of personal interviews were conducted with managers at different levels – general, technical, administrative, and financial. The obtained data were statistically grouped and analysed.

A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed to managers at different levels as mentioned above from 75 hotels. 110 valid responses were received; the response rate was 85%. To test that the sample was representative and not biased, the Chi-square test was used. The Chi-squire test indicated no statistically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents with respect to hotel size ($\chi^2 = 3.022$, $p = 188$, 2-sided) and ownership sectors ($\chi^2 = 2.378$, $p = 267$, 2-sided). The sample thus is representative of the population and the findings can be generalised to the entire population (hotel sector).

3.2 Reliability Analyses

The reliability test has been carried out using Cronbach's alpha, which measures the internal consistency of a construct. The recommended minimum acceptable limit of reliability alpha for this measure is 60 % (Sekaran,

2003). The result can be seen in table 1, which show that all the constructs have passed reliability test where all α- values have exceeded the recommended minimum value of Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1. Reliability analyses of the research constructs

constructs	Number of items	α
motives	12	83
Risks and problems	4	71

Sekaran (2003) also added that the main benefit of questionnaire design relates to how the questions are worded and measured, and how the total questions are organized. Researchers state that the questionnaires should be free from ambiguities, inappropriate wording or misleading questions (Sekaran 2003; Oppenheim, 1992). Oppenheim (1992) emphasizes that it is essential to ensure this by piloting each question and every question sequence. He argues that even the questions that are taken from other surveys (studies) need to be piloted to ensure that they will work as required with the kind of respondents involved. Thus the questionnaires were pre-tested and piloted.

3.3 Profile of Respondents

The study sample shows variables with regard to age, gender and ownership of the hotels. It can be seen from Table 1 that the age category 20-30 represented 10.9%; the age category 41-50 represented 38.2%, while the age category 51 and above represented 1703%. In terms of gender, it was found that almost 85.5 % of the respondents were males against 14.5% for females. The ownership types were 88% local hotels and 12% foreign hotels. 30% of them had less than five years working experience in their current position 15.5% of respondents had a total experience of less than ten years in their current position and 14.6% had a total experience of 21 years and above. 44% of respondents represented small hotels, 31% medium hotels and 25% large hotels. The respondents' characteristics are summarised in Table 2

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents

Age	Frequency	%
20-30	12	10.9
31- 40	37	33.6
41-50	42	38.2
51 and above	19	17.3
Gender	Frequency	%
Male	94	85.5
Female	16	14.5
Length of Service	Frequency	%
1-5	17	15.4
6-10	24	21.8
11-15	22	20
16-20	31	28.2
21 and above	16	14.6
Employment (hotel size)	Frequency	%
Less than 50 employees	33	44
51-100 employees	23	31
More than 100 employees	19	25
Ownership	Frequency	%
Local	66	88
Foreign	9	12

4. Results and Hypotheses Testing

4.1 Results

The respondents were asked to indicate what objectives were achieved by their alliances and to what extent, and what factors they considered potential causes of alliance failure and the extent to which these factors influenced the alliance outcome The relative importance of each of the investigated attributes in the motives in using strategic alliances; and problems facing applying strategic alliances (table 3 and table 4). For each statement, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed along a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= "not at all important" to 5= "very important". In table 1 the respondents, on average, rated the 12 items in a range between "4.71" and "2.44".

Table 3. Motives in using marketing strategic alliances

Motives in using strategic alliances	Mean*	SD
1- Entering new markets;	2.710	1.365
2- Adjust to environmental changes;	2.441	1.177
3- Gaining access to new technology,	4.201	1.226
4- Knowledge sharing; cooperative learning and embedded skills;	4.711	1.233
5- Achieving vertical integration, recreating and extending supply links	3.621	1.022
6- Acquiring means of distribution;	4.000	1.415
7- Diversifying into new businesses;	3.532	1.126
8- Improving performance;	4.511	1.112
9- Cost sharing, pooling of resources;	4.310	1.100
10- Developing products, technologies, resources;	3.754	1.230
11- Reduce financial and political risk ;	2.711	1.398
12- Achieving competitive advantage;	3.633	1.239

*The mean is derived from a scale of 1= not at all important to 5= very important

Table 4. Risks and problems in using marketing strategic alliances

problems in using strategic alliances	Mean*	SD
1- Lack of trust	4.100	1.990
2- Lack of coordination between partners (partner selection)	3.200	1.224
3- Lack of clear goals and objectives	3.400	1.187
4- Performance risk	2.860	1.231

*The mean is derived from a scale of 1= not at all important to 5= very important

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

H1: manager motives in applying the marketing strategic alliances are positive

T-tests are used when the researcher has two groups (e.g. males and females) or two sets of data (e.g. before and after) and when the researcher wishes to compare the mean score on some continuous variable (Sekaran, 2003). The t-test is robust so that even if the distributions are only vaguely normal: humped in the middle and tailing off to the sides then the t-test is still likely to be valid. This is especially true for large samples (greater than 30)".

Table 5 shows that the mean for motives in using the marketing strategic alliances are positive is 3.676, which is higher than the test value (2.5), i.e. motives behind using marketing strategic alliances are not negative. Hence, this hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 5. One-sample t-test: motives

(a)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motives	110	3.6761	.5932	3.572E-02

(b)

	Test Value = 2.5*		
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Motives	28.766	109	.000

*The mean of the scale, since the Likert scale has been used which contains five points; hence test value 2.5 is 5 divided by 2.

H2: Mangers evaluations regarding the risk and problems in applying marketing strategic alliances are negative

To test this hypothesis, the researcher has used means, and standard deviations for customers' (one sample t-test) responses regarding their evaluation and their views towards the risk and problems in applying marketing strategic alliances. Table 6 shows, the mean of risk and problems (barriers) is 3.3211, which is higher than test value 2.5, i.e. the risk and problems in applying marketing strategic alliances are not negative. In other words, the managers feel that there are a risk and problems facing them in applying alliances strategy. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6. One-sample t-test: risk and problems

(a)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Risk and problems	110	3.3211	.5557	3.530E-02

(b)

	Test Value = 2.5		
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
risk and problems	31.231	109	.000

5. Discussions, Conclusions and Implications

The research findings show that the highest ranked statements in managers' views regarding to the motives in using marketing strategic alliances are that "knowledge sharing; cooperative learning and embedded skills", followed by "improving performance". Since, Jordan is viewed as one of the major players in the economic and political stability of the Middle East region and adopted a liberal economic policy by attracting investors from different countries. This fact leads to some interesting findings the lowest ranking statements regarding managers' views of motives behind using strategic alliances are that "adjust to environment changes", followed by "reduce financial and political risk", and followed by "entering new markets".

The results of this study are consistent with Hamel et al. (1989); who asserted that alliances can be used to learn the skills of the other partner. Similarly, Inkpen, (2005) reported that leaning has been regarded as one of the major motives for strategic alliances. In the same vein, Jones et al. (2003) indicated that leaning is achieved through sharing information and knowledge within individual and organizations. In fact, firms enter alliances to get knowledge 'knowledge transfer', information and other sources (Elmuti and Kathawala; 2001; Mellat-Parast, 2007).

On the other hand, the research findings show that the highest ranked statements in managers' views regarding to the risks and problems facing marketing strategic alliances are that "lack of trust", followed by "lack of clear goals and objectives". Meanwhile, the lowest ranking statements regarding managers' views of risks in using strategic alliances is "performance risks". The results of this study are consistent with the literature which explicitly mentions that a lack of inter-firm trust is one of the main reasons for strategic alliance failure (Kelly et al., 2002). In the same spirit, empirical studies also show that trust can influence the performance of the alliance. Gulati et al. (2000) indicated that strategic alliances promoted trust and reduced transaction costs; therefore, trust directly affects performance.

Considering the results of hypothesis testing summarized in tables 5 and 6 respectively, the decision was made to accept the research hypothesis H1 "manager motives in applying the marketing strategic alliance are positive". Meanwhile, the research hypothesis H2 "manager evaluations regarding the risk and problems in applying marketing strategic alliances are negative" has been rejected. However, the results of hypothesis H1 and H2 are consistent with the previous studies. These results indicate that hotel managers have a good and appositive attitude towards marketing strategic alliances.

One of the most notable trends in recent years has been the growth in the popularity of alliances between competitors, prospective competitors, and even supply chain members. Most studies tend to focus on successful stories of strategic alliances and ignore the fact that perhaps as much as 70 percent of strategic alliances fail (Zineldin and Dodourova, 2005). Although the literature advocates the use of marketing strategic alliance as important tools to improve and maintain their level of competitiveness, the hospitality management scholars have given little or no attention to the study of marketing strategic alliances in tourism firms in both developed and emerging market contexts(Lownesberg, 2010). In this study the efforts were made to shed the light and fill the gap in the literature by providing a contribution to better understand the nature and practice of the marketing

strategic alliances in hotels in Jordan. One of the objectives of this study was to identify and analyze the reasons for the high percentage of alliance failure

Nevertheless, the number of co-operating agreements that usually fail is very high. They also constitute each partner firms' corporate social capital, providing potential access to various assets controlled by other strategic alliance network members. One feature is selective membership which attempts to add value to each hotel. The hope is that each hotel would bring some specialty service to the alliance with the intent of making the alliance stronger. Hotels are in need of providing more value to consumers. Alliances can offer this added value by affecting cost and quality. Marketing strategic alliances are sometimes designed to achieve wider goals and objectives than those simply of the alliance partners.

However, although this study has fulfilled its aim and objectives, it is thought that there are many areas for additional studies and empirical research, given the limitations of the research. The choice of population and sample were limited to a single industry, namely hotels sector, which has a tendency to limit the generalisability of the findings in the context of other industries.

On a geographical dimension, this study was primarily limited to 75 hotels in Jordan, located in three cites (Amman, Petra and Aqaba). An interesting line of enquiry would be to replicate the research across the corporate sector of the hotel industry. In the same way, other studies elsewhere in Jordan and even in a similar context (Arab World) would provide valuable comparative data for managers and academics about the cross-fertilization of marketing strategic alliance and customer services.

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