ABSTRACT: Some authors have pointed out that the mere formation of an alliance is not sufficient guarantee for the achievement of its potential benefits. During its implementation, the behaviour of the companies will play a key role for the appropriate development of the relationship. Through a case study methodology of research, we analyse why in some agreements a more cooperative relationship is reached among the partners than in others. We try to advance in the knowledge about the determinant factors of the partners’ behaviour in both international and domestic strategic alliances. A theoretical model related to the determinant factors of the cooperative behaviour is the major result of this paper.

Key words: international and domestic alliances; partners’ cooperative behaviour; dependence; perceptions; performance
INTRODUCTION

Some authors have pointed out that the mere formation of an alliance is not sufficient guarantee for the achievement of the potential benefits which the partners pursue (Doz, 1996; Ariño & García Pont, 1996; Buckley & Casson, 1998). During the implementation of these agreements the companies behave in a determinate way, which may be considered as more or less cooperative according to their adaptation to the needs and expectations of the partners. The behaviour of the companies will be a key factor for the continuity and the appropriate development of the relationship. It will also be one of the aspects taken into consideration by the partners in the continuous assessment, which these will carry out as the agreement goes along (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Parkhe, 1993a).

In this paper, we analyse why in some agreements a more cooperative relationship is reached between the partners than in others, and how the behaviour of the companies has an influence, during the implementation of the alliance, on its results. We will study the aspects that should be considered by the companies that are participating both in international and domestic cooperative agreements or are considering the possibility of doing so. Our results will advance in the knowledge about how to implement their alliances, achieving their objectives and foreseeing the potential difficulties, which may arise during such implementation.

With the aim of understanding of the factors which determine a greater or lesser degree of cooperative behaviour, we use a case study research methodology because the study of cases is preferable to other research methodologies (experiments, questionnaires, etc.) (1) when the existing theoretical framework is still weak or seems inadequate to approach the subject being analysed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Bonache, 1999), (2) when we intend to give answers to questions relating to the “why” and the “how” of certain aspects or phenomenon (Yin, 1994) and (3) when the phenomenon under study cannot be separated from its context (Ruiz et al. 1998). In our case, we intend to study in depth the reason why the partners demonstrate a more or less cooperative behaviour and how their behaviour influences the performance of the agreements in which they take part. These aspects are unlikely to be separable from the context in which the alliances develop, since the behaviour of the individuals and organisations depends on multiple contextual factors, which are difficult to foresee in advance.
The cooperative behaviour is a concept that mainly stems from the Game Theory. Transferring to the field of the alliances the definition of Axelrod & Kehoane (1986), the cooperative behaviour could be interpreted as the adjustment of the behaviour of a company to the expectations and preferences (present or future) of its partner in the agreement.

Cooperative agreements are formed with the aim to achieve some common objectives, by means of the combination or the use of the resources and/or capabilities of each of the partners, existing therefore, a mutual interdependence which implies that each company is vulnerable to the the other partner’s behaviour. On the other hand, the partners are sovereign organisations, which have their own particular objectives and that have the inalienable right to pursue them (Buckley & Casson, 1988). Therefore, there is a possibility that potential conflicts may arise between the partners, giving cause to opportunistic behaviour encouraged by the search of the particular interests.

Therefore, given that the alliances are relationships in which co-exist the conditions of interdependence and potential conflict (Ariño, 1995), they constitute a context in which the cooperative behaviour is a necessary aspect for its correct development and the achievement of the pursued objectives (Schelling, 1960). So, the knowledge of the aspects that can have an influence over the cooperative behaviour of the companies can be of great advantage to foresee the difficulties that may arise in the implementation of these agreements.

Some sets of variables could have a determinant effect over the behaviour of the partners. The first one derives from some contributions stemming from a sociological approach, together with others from economic and strategic perspectives, and refers to aspects related to the degree of dependence existing between the partners. The second set of variables is directly related to the relationship of exchange established between the partners, understood from a perspective in which it is assumed that cooperative agreements are economic relationships developed by means of a gradual process of social exchange, by which the parties can acquire a feeling of mutual trust. In these processes of trust creation, the perceptions of the participating companies, about the progress of the agreement and about the behaviour of each other partner, play an important role (Parkhe, 1993a; Escribá 2002).

**Cooperative behaviour**

The behaviour of the companies in an alliance is a multidimensional concept, and can be observed in a wide range of attitudes and actions (Buckley & Casson, 1988; Ariño, 1997). The approach implicit in the Game Theory is narrowed to the adjustment of a participant’s actions with respect to the present and future preferences of the others (Axelrod, 1984). Nevertheless, in the study of alliances between companies it is convenient to go more deeply into which attitudes and actions are expected by each of the partners with respect to the other companies. Borys & Jemison (1989) consider that the cooperative
agreements have their own characteristics, which distinguish them from other types of relationships between companies, among which stand out the need for a mutual commitment and an important effort for the coordination and conflict solving. So, from some theoretic and empirical studies, focused on behavioural variables which are generally considered among those which positively influence an evaluation of the success of the alliances, we present a set of behavioural signs to be observed during our cases study.

**Commitment**
Understood as the willingness to make efforts to maintain the relationship, contributing with the people, the time and the investments needed for its accomplishment. (Ariño, 1997; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Johnson, 1997; Dyer, 1997; Gulati, Khanna & Nohria, 1994).

**Coordination of partners actions**
Efforts and concern for the coordination of the activities of the partners, carrying out the tasks entrusted to each one, and facilitating the fulfilment of activities to the other party (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

**Quality of communication**
Transmission of accurate, truthful and clear information (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Ariño, 1997; Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

**Degree in which partners share the participation in planning and decision taking**
Sharing the planning activities with the aim of make easier the achievement of the objectives of all participants (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Saxton, 1997).

**Constructive methods for conflict solving**
It is important that these methods provide satisfactory solutions for all parties involved, in the interests of securing the continuity of the agreement (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Lorange & Ros, 1992; Anderson & Narus, 1990).

**Dependence**
Sociological theories, such as those focused on social exchange, power or resource dependence, sustain that insofar as an actor feels dependant on another to meet his objectives, he will be interested in maintaining the relationship existing between them. In accordance with the reciprocity norms existing in all social relationships, the dependent actor will behave in a cooperative manner expecting a reciprocal response from the other party (Gouldner, 1960).

In alliances, the degree of dependence of a company with respect to the established relationship can be determined by the importance that the agreement has for said company. This importance can be understood in strategic terms, that is to say when said agreement provides it with certain resources or capabilities which are basic for the achievement of its strategic objectives or for the survival of the company (Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Horton & Richey, 1997). On the other hand, from an economical perspective, can be considered as specific investments made by a company, within the alliance, involve a greater cost of change and an increase the economic risk of failure, since their specific nature increase the difficulty of recovering said investments (Nootboon, Berger & Noordenhaven, 1997). But, also, the
investments on specific assets can have a positive effect on the potential benefits (shadow of the future) of the agreement (Parkhe, 1993a; Dyer, 1997; Gulati, Khanna & Nohria, 1994). Any way, the importance of this kind of investment also increases the relationship’s dependence on the partner that makes it.

On the other hand, following Emerson’s approach (1962), the degree of dependence on a relationship is inversely proportional to the possibilities that an actor may have to obtain its objectives outside of said relationship. Therefore, for a company participating in an alliance, any aspect that may suppose a greater potential for individual action, can mean a lesser degree of dependence on the agreement.

**Perceptions**

The consideration of alliances as relationships of social exchange, as opposed to the traditional conception of the economic approach of alliances as transactions, makes us reconsider the traditional politic-economic notion of power as the central mechanism of coordination of the exchange. If the cooperative agreements are socially developed and organised, the trust between the parties and their commitment, acquire a key dimension for their success (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993). The expectation of a reciprocal behaviour from its partner, leads a firm to behave cooperatively, assuming higher risks in the relationship. If the former corresponds reciprocally the degree of trust existent between them will gradually increase or, otherwise, will disappear as a consequence of negative perceptions related to non cooperative (or even opportunistic) behaviour of the partners. Therefore, the generation or destruction of trust between the partners should be intimately related with the perceptions that these have over each other behaviour (Cullen, Johnson & Sakano, 1995). Nevertheless, to consider that the commitment of each company and the degree to which it will behave in a manner more or less cooperative as merely a consequence of the degree of trust existing is too restrictive. The partners pursue a number of objectives, common and private, and their perceptions about the accomplishment of their expectations (Menguzzato, 1992 b), of the degree of achievement of their objectives, and of the role which the alliance plays in this sense, may increase or decrease the company’s interest in the maintenance of the relationship (Yan, 1998; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Ariño, 1995).

Apart from the assessment of the agreement’s efficiency or of its contribution to the achievement of the objectives, which has already been addressed, Ring & Van de Ven (1994) emphasise that the partners also carry out a continuous evaluation of the relationship in terms of equity. The perceptions of justice or equity in the relationship will maintain the commitment and the interest of the partners in the relationship, while the perceptions of injustice or inequality, will undermine said commitment, and may affect the behaviour of the participating companies.

Lastly, it is necessary to point out that on international cooperative agreements, one has to take in account that different national and social cultures could have an influence in the way that people interpret and
understand each other behaviour and attitudes (Parkhe, 1991). So, comparison between international and domestic agreements should be considered in the study of the determinants of the partners’ behaviour.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

Methodology

In qualitative methodology the selection of cases does not follow a statistical basis, but a theoretical one (Yin, 1994). With the aim to achieve our objectives (on the basis of theoretical replication logic) we selected four alliances: two domestic (one with a high performance and the other one with a low performance) and two international (one with a high performance and the other one with a low performance). To carry out this selection we proceeded to interview executives from 15 companies participating in as many alliances, which were identified through various database and news that appeared in the press\(^1\). These interviews allowed us to obtain rich information, which was used to choose those alliances that were the most suitable to the object of this study. Table 1 shows the main characteristics of the alliances, which were selected, and of the companies which participated in them. The names of the companies have been modified for reasons of confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Firm characteristics</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Type of the alliance</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BETA-ESP</td>
<td>(Glass and pottery)</td>
<td>370 Employees, “Cooperative”</td>
<td>Commercial Joint Venture</td>
<td>1992 - Continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETA-FR</td>
<td>(Glass and pottery distribution)</td>
<td>14 Employees. Familiar Firm</td>
<td>Access to complementary products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAMBDA-ESP</td>
<td>(Warming systems by induction)</td>
<td>145 Employees. Sales: 71 million Euros.</td>
<td>Access to the Korean market for automobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAMBDA-KOR</td>
<td>(Warming systems by induction)</td>
<td>24 Employees. Sales: 4.2 million Euros.</td>
<td>Access to high technological capabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAMMA-ESP</td>
<td>(Paint and varnishes for furniture)</td>
<td>105 Employees. Familiar Firm</td>
<td>Joint Venture (Manufacturing and sales)</td>
<td>1993 - Continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELTA-ESP</td>
<td>(Automobile washing machines)</td>
<td>370 Employees. Familiar Firm</td>
<td>Access to flexibility in production for components</td>
<td>Outsourcing agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELTAZ-ESP</td>
<td>(Utensil machinery and other mechanic components)</td>
<td>55 Employees. Sales: 8.6 million Euros.</td>
<td>Stability of demand and access to technological knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration from analysed cases.

Managers and executives involved in the establishment and the implementation of the four selected alliances were interviewed in various occasions (see Table 2). In the two domestic cases we had access to executives from the two companies involved. In the international alliances it was only possible to contact those of the Spanish company. Following the protocol of the case, developed for the purpose in this research\(^2\), we registered the interviews, which oscillated between 90 and 180 minutes and that were carried out by means of semi-structured scripts. In these interviews we dealt with aspects relating to the decision to cooperate and to the relationship maintained with their partners during the development of the
agreements, highlighting the issues considered in the preliminary theoretical framework. According to the protocol, we also collected documentary information relative to the alliance, such as contracts, minutes of both meetings and negotiations between partners, minutes of boards of directors, and the information was triangulated both among different evaluator (investigator triangulation) and through comparison among interviews with different executives and with the obtained documentation (data triangulation) (Yin, 1994).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Duration. Mean (Min.)</th>
<th>Interviewed people</th>
<th>Documentary sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INT (-)</td>
<td>BETA-ESP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>General Manager, Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Joint Venture Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT (+)</td>
<td>LAMBDA-ESP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Marketing Manager, Controller (2)</td>
<td>Joint Venture Contract, Technological license contract, Order of the day of the Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM (-)</td>
<td>GAMMA1-ESP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>General Manager (2), Operations Manager</td>
<td>Joint Venture Contract, Order of the day of the meetings between the partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM (+)</td>
<td>GAMMA2-ESP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>General Manager, Finance Manager, General Manager</td>
<td>Bilateral Contracts, Minutes of meetings between the partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM (+)</td>
<td>DELTA1-ESP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Project Manager, Purchase Manager</td>
<td>Bilateral Contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELTA2-ESP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>General Manager (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration from analysed cases.

With the object to handle the information that was collected, it was codified into four large categories: (1) aspects relating to perceived degree of dependence of the partners with respect to the alliance, (2) managers perceptions of the development of the agreement, about the partners’ behaviour and the conflicts arose among the companies, (3) the behaviour displayed by each of the partners and (4) the partners’ evaluations with respect to the performance of the agreement.

**Evaluations**

The starting point consisted of the evaluation of the degree of dependence of the partners with respect to the agreement (see Table 3). For this purpose, the interviews focused on aspects relative to the importance of the alliance in both strategic and economic terms. We took into consideration the executives’ evaluations of the importance of objectives sought by their companies in the alliances and their relationship with the private objectives of the company in their corporate and competitive strategies. It was also considered how close the alliance was to the core resources and capabilities enjoyed or required by the company for their business to be successful. On the other hand, we proceeded to evaluate the degree of specificity of the investments carried out and their quantity (in relative terms with respect to the size and the financial capacity of the company). Lastly, we asked the executives to assess the possibilities of their company attaining on its own the objectives sought through the alliances, either individually or by means of other alternative strategic options, such as mergers and acquisitions or the search for other partners with which to develop similar alliances.
Secondly, the research focused on the assessment of the behaviour demonstrated by the partners in the relationship. Following the same logic, we dealt with issues relating to the different behavioural dimensions considered in our theoretical framework. During these interviews we evaluated both the behaviour of the company being analysed and the executives’ perceptions with respect to the behaviour displayed by the partners. In the cases where we were able to interview executives of both partners we proceeded to contrast our evaluations (about the behaviour of a company) with those carried out by their partner with the aim to validate our evaluation criterion.

Finally we dealt with issues relating to the perceptions about the evolution of the relationship and to the evaluations of the executives regarding to its performance. With this aim, we took into consideration the evolution of the degree of trust between the partners; the achievement of the objectives; the satisfaction with the development of the alliances; and the perceived equity in the processes and in the results of the same.

| Analysed aspect | BETA-ESP | BETA-FR | GAMMA1-ESP | GAMMA2-ESP | DELTA1-ESP | DELTA2-ESP | LAMBDA-ESP | LAMBDA-KOR
|-----------------|----------|---------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Proximity to core competencies / Risk of losing a new competitor | Medium | Very High | Low | Medium | Very High | Low | Very High | Medium | Transference of latest technologies and production systems.
| Assessment of the importance of the pursued objectives | High | Low | Medium – High | Low | Medium | Low | Medium | Very High | Very High |
| Investments (in relative terms) | Low | Medium – High | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Medium | Low | Medium |
| Specific nature of investments | Investments useful for their own activities | Investments easy to sell | Investments useful for their own activities | Some specific investments for technologies of LAMBDA-ESP, post-restrictions for use |
| Tacitness to the resources or capabilities accessed | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Medium | Low | High | Medium – High | Korean Market knowledge & contacts. Few supp |
| Scarcity of suppliers for these resources or capabilities | Medium | Low | N/A | N/A | High | Low | Medium | Low | Medium |
| Alternatives (Individual action) | Very High | Low | Medium | Low | High | Low | Very Low | Medium | Medium |
| Mergers / Acquisitions | Very Low | Very Low | Medium | Low | High | Low | Very Low | Low | Medium |
| (Other similar alliances) | Very High | Very Low | Medium | Low | High | Low | High | Medium | Medium |
| International structure, closed to mergers but very active in alliances | Resources to act individually. A merger is not useful for this purpose. Very active in alliances. Not resources to act individually. A merger is not useful for this purpose. | Not resources to act individually. | Can produce components by itself. Resources to acquire suppliers and very active in alliances. Small sales & distribution system closed to mergers and active in alliances strategies. | Not structure and contacts in Korea. Resources to develop mergers and active in alliances strategies. Obsolete technologies and scarcity of resources to acquire other business. | Low | High | High | Very High |
| Global assessment of the degree of dependence on the alliance | Very Low | Very High | Medium | Medium | Low | High | High | Very High |
| Relative power | Unbalanced (BETA-ESP higher) | Very High | Medium – Low | Unbalanced (DELTA-ESP higher) | Similar | Similar | LAMBDA-ESP higher |

Table 4 shows, as a summary, the evaluations of the degree of dependence, the perceptions, the partners’ behaviour and the performance of the agreements, arranged from lesser to greater evaluation of the performance. The priority has been established by analysing the same information in the four cases that were studied, without meaning to offer a quantitative evaluation of said factors, but with the object of analysing the problem, taking into consideration the perspective and the perceptions of the executives who were interviewed.
### TABLE 4. Summary of assessments related to dependence degree, perceptions, behaviour and performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Firms</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Cooperative Behaviour</th>
<th>Dependence</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT (+)</td>
<td>LAMBDA-ESP</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>High High*</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LAMBDA-KOR</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM (+)</td>
<td>DELTA-ESP</td>
<td>High Medium - High</td>
<td>Medium Medium - High</td>
<td>Low High</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DELTA-ESP</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Intermediate-Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM (-)</td>
<td>GAMMA1-ESP</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Intermediate-Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAMMA2-ESP</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT (-)</td>
<td>BETA-ESP</td>
<td>Medium - Low</td>
<td>Medium - Low</td>
<td>Very High*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BETA-FR</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration from analysed cases.

* Information obtained from the Spanish partner

N/A Not Available

### Relationship patterns

Following the methodology proposed by Miles & Huberman (1984) we sought relationship patterns by means of arranged meta-matrixes, patterns and scatterplots which served to analyse the existing relationships and to detect cases in which the planned patterns were not adhered to. On the one hand, we observed that, both in the international and in the domestic context, the performance were greater in those cases where both partners were demonstrating a high degree of cooperative behaviour (Cases DELTA and LAMBDA). Although we did not observe in any of the cases an opportunistic behaviour (not cooperative by commission, that is to say that it was actively harmful to the partner company) (Ariño, 1997), we did detect some non cooperative attitudes (by omission) such as: little willingness to contribute with resources and to dedicate time and people (BETA-ESP; BETA-FR; GAMMA2-ESP); little effort to coordinate the partners’ actions (BETA-ESP; BETA-FR; DELTA1-ESP; GAMMA2-ESP), as well as; deficiency in the transmission of information by some of the participating companies (GAMMA2-ESP; DELTA2-ESP). These attitudes were considered by their partners as slight problems in the relationship which negatively affected their evaluation of the processes through which the planned objectives were being achieved, undermining their satisfaction for the development of the agreement. Furthermore, in their opinion, these meant obstacles for the achievement of the mutual and individual targets. On the other hand, the degree to which the planning of the activities of the alliance is shared did not seem to be considered among those aspects connected with the partners’ behaviour.

Contrary to the expected patterns, in the case of GAMMA1-ESP, this firm demonstrated an unexpected high cooperative behaviour, which was high enough to compensate their partner’s attitude. With this effort GAMMA1-ESP was able to achieve some of the anticipated objects. Nevertheless, its evaluation with respect to the degree of satisfaction of the relationship was radically damaged. They considered that the obtained results were insufficient with regard to the effort dedicated by the company. On the other hand, its partner (GAMMA2-ESP) considered the agreement to have been inefficient in periods and that the
software which had been developed did not completely adapt to their needs. So, our two first propositions are focused on the relationship existing between the partners’ cooperative behaviour and the alliance performance and on the definition of the concept of said cooperative behaviour. These propositions are not different for alliances developed either in an international context or in a domestic one.

**Proposition 1:** The performance of an alliance is positively influenced when all partners demonstrate a high degree of cooperative behaviour.

**Proposition 2:** The cooperative behaviour is a multi-dimensional variable which consists of the adaptation to the needs and expectations of the other party in what refers to: (1) the contribution of resources and the dedication of people and time, (2) making efforts to coordinate the activities, (3) offering the necessary information in a truthful and opportune manner and (4) the adoption of constructive methods in the conflict solving processes, such as persuasion or the search for consensus.

Next, the analysis of the determinant factors of the cooperative behaviour was approached. In the studied cases we could observe a pattern relating cooperative behaviour of a partner and its degree of dependence in the alliance (measured both in relative and absolute terms). Although the partners’ degree of dependence (and their relative power in the relationship) offered a direct relationship with their behaviour, in four of the analysed cases we observed an uncommon relationship between the degree of dependence and the behaviour shown by these. In the two domestic cases, companies with a relatively low degree of dependence on the alliance, valued in terms of strategic and economical importance, demonstrated higher cooperative attitudes than it was expected (DELTA1-ESP, GAMMA1-ESP). Their behaviours were adapted to the needs of their partners as regards their willingness to make investments and to dedicate time and people, the quality of transmission of information and the coordination efforts. Moreover, these are companies that try to solve conflicts by consensus and in a constructive manner. In these two cases, we looked for different reasons for said cooperative behaviour (theory triangulation). The executives of DELTA1-ESP emphasised the good disposition of their partner for the development of the alliance’s activities (perception of a reciprocal cooperative behaviour) and the high degree of trust which prevailed among them. The General Manager of DELTA2-ESP confirmed these reasons. This executive also added that their mutual trust had been generated through a long professional relationship.

On the contrary, in the case of GAMMA1-ESP perceptions about their partner’s behaviour were negative. However, the General Manager of this company took on the responsibility of doing the project as a personal challenge. This executive had defended for many years that alliances should be one of the basic pillars of his corporate strategy. In this sense, the project may not have had a great strategic importance in itself, but it did have from the perspective of the legitimisation of the aspirations of management. It is worth highlighting, that the perceptions of the executives from GAMMA2-ESP, were positive with respect to their partner’s behaviour, existing a high degree of trust, but they were negative with respect to the results of the agreement.
But, on the other hand, it is also possible that the companies could be trying to avoid the potential negative effects of an opportunistic behaviour (or a low degree of cooperative behaviour) over their social and economic reputation. In the domestic context there are multiple points of intersection in personal, social, and economic networks. So, failure of an alliance due to a non-cooperative behaviour could have a negative effect on their reputation. On the contrary, it is more difficult that the information about the behaviour of a partner in an international agreement, arrive to its social and economic context through their international networks. So, it is not unreasonable to say that when the failure or success of an established agreement can have an influence on the company reputation, the degree of dependence of said company with respect to the alliance would be higher.

In one of the international cases, the expectation of a high cooperative behaviour on the part of BETA-FR, as a consequence of its great dependence on the agreement, did not correspond to the reality observed. Said company simply carried out the basic commitments of the agreement, without a clear willingness to support or coordinate with its partner and with a mediocre communication quality. These evaluations were obtained from the information which was facilitated by the managers of BETA-ESP, and in so far as this last is a “cooperative enterprise”, they could be trying to justify their scarce cooperative willingness by blaming the partner. In this way they would not have to publicly recognise that they had taken advantage of their position of power in the agreement. Nevertheless, it is also possible that the French company may have perceived a not very cooperative behaviour on the part of BETA-ESP, especially because of their lack of willingness to dedicate resources, time and people, their scarce cooperative effort or their predilection for coercive and imposing methods for solving conflict between them. Therefore, its behaviour could reflect the minimum attitude to maintain the relationship, given its high degree of dependence, but also its dissatisfaction with the attitude of its Spanish partner.

According to our observations, the degree of dependence which a company has with respect to its partner in a cooperative agreement positively influences its attitude towards said agreement, but it is mediated by the perceptions of the other party’s behaviour (with regard to its attitude during the process and in the sharing out of results) and of the achievement of the mutual and individual objectives anticipated. In the scatterplot of Figure 1 we observed how both factors interact offering an explanation for the behaviour that was demonstrated by the companies that were analysed.
So our third proposition is related to the joint effect of dependence and perceptions over the partners’ cooperative behaviour

*Proposition 3: A company’s cooperative behaviour is determined by (1) its degree of dependence with respect to the established agreement and (2) its perceptions of the behaviour demonstrated by the partner, the degree of achievement its objectives and the perceived equity on the relationship.*

Determinants of cooperative behaviour do not seem to be different in international and domestic alliances. Nevertheless, it is worthy to point out that in international agreements, specially in those with high cultural differences, the partners anticipate that there is a potential for misunderstandings about the meanings to the same attitudes or behaviours, as a consequence of their different cultures, values and social norms. The evidence of this potential problem can lead to its consideration from the very beginning, during the negotiation processes and the establishment of the alliance control, communication and management systems. Thus, cultural problems can be avoid if considered and acknowledged by the partners. In our case LAMBDA, an agreement between two companies from a very distinct cultures (Spain and Korea), the joint venture and technology licence contracts were very detailed and specific, and included clauses about meanings, communication norms and commonly agreed behaviours that should be respected by the partners. The acknowledgement of the potential misunderstandings from the starting point can help to avoid future problems related to wrong perceptions and, consequently, can avoid the negative effects of these cultural differences on the partners’ cooperative behaviour.

**CONCLUSION: AN INDUCED THEORETICAL MODEL**

The evidence generated in this study suggests that not only there is a direct relationship between the type of behaviour demonstrated by the companies and the performance of the alliances in which they take part, but that said behaviour may be influenced by the degree of dependence of these companies and by their
perceptions about the behaviour of their partners and agreement’s results. With the aim of clarifying these relationships, we have presented a set of theoretical propositions that may constitute the starting point for posterior quantitative analysis aimed of test them.

The understanding of these aspects may be of interest for companies, which are developing alliances both in the international and in the domestic arena, or are considering the possibility of doing so in a near future. This work contribute with a more complete vision that may be useful in the negotiations and re-negotiations of the agreements (to foresee the possible contingencies of the implementation deriving from different positions of power or the suitability of some or other mechanisms of coordination) and in the implementation itself (identifying the behaviour which should be demonstrated in order to maintain the relationship in time).

So, we consider that the alliances must be studied from a broad viewpoint, which includes, at the same time, economical, strategic, social and cultural considerations, as they are inter-organisational relationships of an economical character, with a strategic logic and socially developed. The behaviour demonstrated by the partners will play an important role in the negotiations and in the implementation of these agreements. Our model emphasises this relational or behavioural perspective, taking into account the effects of variables of an economic, strategic and social character.

Secondly, in our study we gathered certain behavioural dimensions which facilitate the correct development of the relationship, positively influencing the other partners’ perceptions and, therefore, also influencing their behaviour, therefore facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the agreement. We have also proposed a multi-dimensional conception of the cooperative behaviour introducing its main dimensions.

Thirdly, the evidence which was obtained in these cases suggests that the behaviour of the companies is determined, by the degree of inter-dependence existing between the participating companies as well as by their perceptions with respect to the their partners’ behaviour and achievement of mutual and individual objectives. So, it is worthy to say that the partners’ dependence on the agreement co-evolves with the alliance development and the achievement of common and private objectives. Similarly, perceptions about each other behaviours and about the alliance results and processes co-evolve with the agreement implementation. Along the alliance implementation, the behaviour of each partner, the processes of interaction between them and the results that are obtained in the alliance, have an influence over the perceptions of the partner firms and over their predisposition to cooperate. Therefore, the study of alliances should be approached from a dynamic and evolutionary perspective.

The Figure 2 shows the theoretical model that has been induced in this study. It presents the aforementioned propositions and the relationships existing between the different aspects which have been analysed. It is necessary to point out that the results of this study cannot be generalised in statistical terms, since the qualitative investigation only allows us to make theoretical generalisations, going from the
individual observation to general proposition (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, the fact that it has not been possible to have access to all the partners in the alliances that we have analysed implicates that these results, and the propositions that derive from them, should be treated with precaution.

This study constitutes a first step towards the understanding of the strong social component of the agreements of cooperation and of its importance in their success or failure. Therefore, it is a starting point for further studies, which may enable us to complete and confirm the propositions here expressed.

REFERENCES:


**Endnotes**

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1 Database information was consulted, such as CORDIS or the database created by a research group of the University of Valencia in the framework of the research project GV 3196/95. Information, from public institutions (Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Valencia, IMPIVA...) and consultancy firms, specialised in acting as advisers for the creation of alliances, were also consulted. Moreover, we studied the information which appeared in the national and regional press or that which was obtained from the Europartenariat Forum which took place in Valencia in November 1998, where direct contact was established with different companies that had participated in various alliances.


3 The degree of dependence was studied taking in account the economic and strategic importance of the alliance to the partners and their availability of other alternatives for the achievement of the same objectives.