

Ownership transfer of patents at the State Intellectual Property Office of China

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Abstract

Ownership transfer of patent rights is a special form of technology transfer. Acquiring a patent implies that a firm sees a market for a technology where others do not. This technology acquisition, however, involves costs for adopting the technology, which might include structural changes within the firm, increasing R&D expenditures or hiring qualified R&D personnel (Serrano 2006). Patent acquisition can thus be seen as an investment, which is especially true when only little is known about the acquired technology.

Empirical evidence shows that ownership transfer of patents from foreign to Chinese owners (filings originally filed by a foreign applicant) has increased enormously in the recent years. This phenomenon accounts for more than 6,000 patents per year. At least at first sight, this not only implies that Chinese firms see a market for the commercialization of foreign technologies, but also that they try to learn from their foreign counterparts.

We intend to first of all analyze basic trends in transfer of patent ownership in China, i.e. who are the sellers and the buyers of SIPO filings, but also examine the structures. This includes the question whether firms acquire technologies they are already familiar with or vice versa, which is achieved by comparing the profile of the transferred patents with the existing patent profile of the new owners at the technology field level. In addition, we will test the assumption that especially (technologically) valuable patents are acquired, as these can be assumed to form the basis of new technological lines within firms.

Literature

Serrano, C.J. (2006): The Market for Intellectual Property: Evidence from the Transfer of Patents, Discussion Paper, University of Toronto and NBER