

ABSTRACT

This thesis springs from a need to research the links between market dynamics and companies' ability to sustain competitive advantage. If market dynamics risk eroding the competitive advantage of a multinational company, and organizational learning is a way of sustaining this competitive advantage, then there is a need to understand the links between distinctive capability, organizational learning and sustainable competitive advantage and, in particular, the repositories of organizational learning that exist at different organizational levels and within various contexts.

Within the research field of industrial strategic marketing management, the overall purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the major strategic issue - sustaining competitive advantage - by describing, analyzing and explaining how the realization of a new marketing strategy can result in increased supply integration that sustains a company's competitive advantage.

This research study is done from an industrial network perspective, into which organizational learning theories and the resource-based view on strategy are integrated to better describe and understand the realization of a new strategy to cope with structural change in industrial markets.

A major contribution is made to industrial marketing theory, in particular by integrating the resource based view into this theory. The dynamic aspect of capabilities is developed through looking at how the meaning structures of individuals as a collective are changed through organizational learning. In the process, contributions are also made to research in the strategy field, especially on strategy execution and dynamic capabilities.

Implications for strategic leadership signalize a paradigmatic shift from prescribing what the work is about and how it is going to be done, to a more consultative role which is about guiding and stimulating employees to reach a more qualitative understanding of their work 'to make things happen'. Finally, it is argued that strategic leadership is about developing dynamic capabilities that maintain a valid theory-of-the-business, for instance, by realizing a new marketing strategy, because it has the capacity to repeatedly achieve new forms of competitive advantages, and thus cope with future structural changes in industrial networks.

Keywords: marketing strategy, strategy realization, organizational learning, meaning structures, cognitive structures, industrial network, organizational capability, dynamic capability, theory-of-the-business, sustainable competitive advantage.